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"NOT OF THE WORLD"

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"Not Of The World"

Discourses on the Christian's Relation to the World : : :

BY

R. B. KUIPER, A.M., B.D.

Author of

"Christian Liberty"
"While the Bridegroom Tarries"
"As to Being Reformed"

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To the Lagrave Avenue Church

FOREWORD

THE following sermons were preached at the Lagrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan.

At the suggestion of Mr. W. B. Eerdmans of the Reformed Press, they were taken down stenographically while being delivered. No material changes have since been made. This accounts for certain peculiarities in their style and diction which require no apology. To my mind the language of sermons should be so simple that even children may listen with profit, the style should be forceful rather than flowery, and the personal appeal should be prominent. I well realize that my homilies meet these requirements imperfectly.

On every hand one hears complaints about the worldliness of church-members. I fear that the charge must be sustained. But some of the suggested remedies I cannot approve of. Easy indulgence will surely do incalculable harm. But neither can we cope with this evil by laying down "rule upon rule, precept upon precept." Nor does the remedy lie in the "touch not, taste not, handle not" policy of asceticism. Ulti-

mately, the only cure of sin is holiness, the one successful antidote for worldliness is spirituality.

Besides several commentaries, Alexander Maclaren's "Expositions of Holy Scripture" and J. Hastings' "The Great Texts of the Bible" proved helpful in writing these discourses.

In the preparation of this little volume I have constantly had in mind these words of Christ's intercessory prayer: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

May it please God to bless this feeble effort of mine unto the sanctification of his people through the truth.

R. B. K.

March 1, 1929

CONTENTS

FOREWORD 7

I. MINGLING WITH THE WORLD—
A Good Mixer 13

II. DIFFERING FROM THE WORLD—
A True Aristocrat 37

III. ENJOYING THE WORLD—
A Healthy Human 59

IV. OVERCOMING THE WORLD—
A Victorious Soldier 79

V. HATED BY THE WORLD—
A Happy Martyr 99

VI. TRAVELING THROUGH THE WORLD—
A Yearning Pilgrim 125

VII. OWNING THE WORLD—
A Multi-Millionaire 151

VIII. EVANGELIZING THE WORLD—
An Ardent Missionary 177

MINGLING WITH THE WORLD

A Good Mixer

I

MINGLING WITH THE WORLD

A Good Mixer

> "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world."
>
> —I Corinthians 5:9, 10

THE problem of the Christian's relation to the world is a pressing one, and more so today than a generation or even a decade ago.

The unprecedented prosperity of the American people, in itself a blessing, has occasioned much worldliness among church-members.

Recent restrictions on immigration and the rapid assimilation of our foreign population also have a bearing on the situation. Only a few years ago several groups of Christians in our land closely resembled drops of oil on the waters of American life. They mixed hardly at all. Generally speaking, they held themselves aloof from the world. The fact that they were recent immigrants made this comparatively easy.

The present situation, in the natural course of events, has become entirely different. They have been Americanized and now mingle quite freely with the world. And so the question of the Christian's proper relation to the world has in their case become a burning one.

Our age is characterized by the very opposite of traditionalism. Young America is rapidly discarding old beliefs and customs. The validity of the Ten Commandments is actually being called into question. This is another of the many causes that have contributed toward making our problem urgent.

But for the present we are interested not so much in the causes that have given rise to this problem as in its *solution*. This series will contain eight sermons. Each will be on a particular phase of the Christian's relation to the world. Let no one presume that any one of them will present a complete solution. For that matter, not even all of these discourses together will do that.

For the avoidance of onesidedness it is important to bear this in mind. For instance, one sermon will be on *Enjoying the World*. If one should think that the Christian's whole duty with reference to the world is to enjoy it, that would be nothing short of calamitous. Such a view would of necessity lead to worldliness. Presently

one would be steeped in the worst kind of worldliness.

It is important, then, to take each of these sermons in connection with all the others. It would be a capital mistake to do otherwise.

To come to our text, the apostle tells us that it is unavoidable that the Christian should come in contact with the world. If he tells us anything, it is that. He even goes so far as to assert that the Christian cannot help mingling with the most worldly people of the world: fornicators, the covetous, extortioners, idolaters. Even with such he cannot escape contact altogether.

Our subject is: MINGLING WITH THE WORLD.

I want to present four thoughts on this subject. The first three constitute a climax.

A. *The Christian CAN mingle with the world.*

B. *The Christian MAY mingle with the world.*

C. *The Christian MUST mingle with the world.*

Our fourth thought is in the nature of an anti-climax:

D. *This mingling has its proper limitations.*

A

In the first place, then, the Christian *can* mingle with the world.

If there is to be contact between the Christian and the world, they must have something in common. If they have nothing in common, all fellowship is out of the question.

Allow me to present this truth in a somewhat striking way. Kindly pardon a homely illustration. Let us say that you are in need of a new necktie, and you buy a very flashy red one. A friend meets you on the street and says: "That tie of yours is louder than a fog-horn." That would surely be ridiculous. It is hardly reasonable to compare a necktie with a fog-horn. You may make a comparison between horns, and say that a fog-horn is louder than an automobile-horn. It is also perfectly proper to call a red necktie louder than a black one. But it is hardly permissible to compare a tie in point of loudness with a horn.

The point is this: if two things are to be merely *compared* with one another, they must already have something in common. Then, surely, if the Christian is to have *contact* with the world, it is essential that he have something in common with it.

The question arises, what it is that the Christian and the world have in common. The answer is: *common grace.*

This sermon is hardly the place for an exposition of the doctrine of common grace. Suffice it here to state that by virtue of this grace worldly men can do some good: no spiritual good—that is out of the question—but what is usually called civic good. Through common grace worldly men can, for instance, be honest in business, engage in social welfare work, do much for the advancement of science and art.

On this basis the worldling and the Christian can cooperate in certain things.

We ought to take into consideration that the apostle was writing to the Corinthian Christians. Corinth was a prosperous city in Greece. Now it is a matter of general knowledge that God showered the blessings of common grace very abundantly upon Greece. For some time this little land led the world in art, literature, philosophy, and science. Paul may very well have had this in mind when he wrote our text.

Let us concretely consider some of the things in which the Christian can have contact with the world. A Christian can do business with a man of the world. Whether it is desirable that they be partners in

business may be an open question, but it cannot be truthfully said that such a relation is an impossibility. A Christian surely can be a member of an automobile club or an improvement association together with non-Christians. Again, it is possible, to say the least, for a Christian to cooperate with others in social welfare work and in the noble cause of the Red Cross. It is possible for him to be a member of the same political organization with worldly people. And it is conceivable that he might, without renouncing his principles, belong to a so-called neutral labor union.

Right here a very important truth must be stated. When the Christian and the worldling cooperate and, to all outward appearances, do the same thing, they are yet doing quite different things. A mere deed is but an empty shell. It is the personality of the doer that gives it content. And so, when the worldly man plays just for the fun of it, the Christian does it that he may be the better fitted for the work which God has assigned to him; and when the man of the world eats and drinks for the satisfaction of his appetite, the child of God does it to the Father's glorification. Their personalities differ radically. The one is regenerated; the other is not.

B

It is not only *possible* for the Christian to company with the world; he *may* also do it.

It is evident that in saying this we are taking a step in advance. There are many things which one can do but may not. To illustrate, your car can easily go fifty miles an hour, but you are not permitted to drive so fast on the city streets. If you do, you run a good chance of "getting pinched." This is but one of the many things which you can do but may not.

But the matter which we are now considering does not fall under this head. Says Paul: "I wrote unto you not to company with fornicators; yet not altogether." That is: "I do not absolutely forbid mingling with worldly people. Sometimes it is permissible."

Not all Christians are convinced of the truth that the Christian *may* mingle with the world. Various objections have been raised to this proposition. We want to consider three of them.

It is sometimes said that mingling on the part of the Christian with the world is a necessary evil. The idea is that, while it cannot possibly be got around, it remains sinful.

Now that argument cannot stand at all. Our text contradicts it. Besides, there is no such thing under the sun as a necessary

evil. If a thing seems to be a necessary evil, as a matter of fact it either is not necessary, or it is not an evil.

A near approach in the Bible to a necessary evil was David's eating of the showbread. You will remember that David and his men were fleeing before the face of King Saul. They became exceedingly hungry and tired. They came to the tabernacle and enquired of the priest whether there was any bread to be had. The priest informed them that he had nothing but showbread. Now nobody was permitted to eat this but the priests. But under the stress of circumstances David and his men ate it. That looks very much like a necessary evil. But Jesus in his comment on this story said that under the circumstances David did the proper thing. So in this case the so-called necessary evil was not an evil; it was just necessary.

Necessary evil simply is a contradiction in terms. The Christian's mingling with the world may not so be styled.

It has often been said that, as God's ancient people Israel were separated from the world, and separated not only in a spiritual sense, but spatially, locally, geographically, so the people of God in the new dispensation should be separated in the same way. They also should be sepa-

rated spatially from the world; they should not mingle with the world at all.

What shall we say to this argument? It does not hold water. Let me mention three valid objections.

It is perfectly true in a general way that the people of Israel were separated locally from the heathen round about them. But let us remember that this was a temporary measure. It was intended for the dispensation of particularism, not for that of universalism, in which we are now living. God was storing up the waters of salvation in the reservoir of Israel until the time that they should burst forth and flood the entire world. That happened when Jesus sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel to all nations.

Then too, Israel's spatial separation from the nations was typical of the spiritual separation of the Christian from the wicked world. Types teach valuable lessons, but are not themselves intended to be permanent.

There is still another argument. Israel's separation from the world was only partial. This is often forgotten. Let no one think that Israel did not come in contact with the neighboring peoples at all. Every once in a while they had friendly dealings with them. Did not the heathen King Hiram of Tyre help Solomon in the construction of the temple of the Lord?

"But," says somebody, "you cannot deny that it is dangerous for God's people to mingle with the world." We readily agree, and hasten to add that some of us can well afford to be reminded of this danger. Let us be exceedingly careful about our contacts with worldly people. But it does not follow that we must avoid all contact.

We are in danger all the time. To avoid every danger is an utter impossibility. To live is dangerous. It is dangerous to ride in an automobile; you might have a collision. It is dangerous to walk; you might be bumped on a crossing or elsewhere. It is dangerous to stay at home, for it is surprising how many accidents happen in homes. It is even dangerous to remain in bed, for if you stay there long you will become weak; and it isn't altogether impossible that some day the plaster will come down from the ceiling and strike you on the head. In attempting to avoid every possible danger, we would be driven to the absurd position of the mother who forbade her children go near water until they had learned to swim.

In view of the impossibility of getting away from every danger and the absurdity of trying to do it, the apostle tells us that the only way to avoid all contact with the world is to get out of it. In order to preclude the possibility of contamination by

the world, we would have to jump off the globe. Try it, and see how far you get.

May I suggest that for a Christian to come in contact with the world is not as perilous as some people think it is? I realize that in saying this we are treading on dangerous ground. Far be it from us to tempt God by exposing ourselves unnecessarily to contamination. But the suggestion stands.

John seventeen contains Christ's intercessory prayer for his disciples. In verse fifteen we read: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." For the Christian's safety it is not necessary that he be taken out of the world, but that God keep him from the evil one. And we may rest assured that God will do this, for it was requested by him whom the Father always hears.

We believe, do we not, the perseverance of saints. Once a saint, always a saint. If you are a saint today, you will be one tomorrow. If you are a Christian now, you can come in rather close contact with the world tomorrow, and the day after you will still be a Christian.

Let us say that your neighbor contracts a contagious disease. There are at least two ways for you to avoid contagion. One way is to keep at a safe distance from your

neighbor. There is another way. You may be inoculated or vaccinated against the disease which your neighbor has, and thus become immune.

These are also the two ways in which we Christians may avoid becoming worldly. Often we must keep away from the world. But this cannot always be done. And so the only thing that will insure our safety is that God inoculate us with so big a dose of holiness that, though we come in quite close contact with the world, we shall prove immune to the disease which the worldling has. This we mean when we say that the only sure preventative of worldliness is holiness of heart.

Have you ever seen a white lily, a spotlessly white lily, growing in a dirty pool of water? I am thinking of a part of Reed's Lake where the water stinks, just stinks. But there are beautiful lilies there. So can the Christian be holy in spite of rather close contact with the foul world.

I once read of a plant which grew at the entrance of a coal mine; mind you, a coal mine. On the plant there was not a single speck of dirt, though the dust lay inches thick on all the country-side. A visitor was quite surprised that this plant should be so white. But presently he saw the reason. Nature provided it with a coat of the most spotlessly white enamel, which instantly shed every speck of dust.

While this illustration may not be applicable to the Christian in every detail, it does suggest John's statement: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." When the apostle wrote these words, he was thinking of the Christian ideally, he had in mind the new man; but, after all, is not the ideal most real?

Let us not forget that extreme separatism also has its dangers. History tells us that men who sought to avoid worldliness by strict separation from the world often became frightfully worldly.

Think of the Pharisees of Jesus' day. The name Pharisee means *separated.* They practised strict separation from publicans and gentiles. But Jesus says that they were covetous. Under the pretense of offering long prayers on street corners they were in the habit of devouring widows' houses. The wonderful parable of Lazarus and the rich man was meant as an awful indictment of the Pharisees. Now covetousness is a gross form of worldliness.

The monks and nuns of the Middle Ages wanted to avoid all contact with the world and so withdrew to convents and monasteries. What happened? Many of these places became veritable brothels. I am thinking of the painting of a monk seated at his desk in a monastery. He looks very

saintly. Over him stands the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove, as he came down upon Jesus at the time of his baptism. But under the desk is a little demon trying to attract the monk's attention by poking his legs. And the evil spirit seems to be getting the better of the argument.

C

We must again go a step farther. The Christian *can* associate with the world; he *may* associate with the world; but he also *must* associate with the world. That is a big step in advance, you will admit.

One doesn't have to do everything that one can and may do. If you are a healthy, normal man, you can smoke; and if you enjoy it, you may smoke, some Christians to the contrary notwithstanding. But you *don't have to* smoke.

However, it is plainly implied in our text that the Christian not only can and may have contact with the world, but also must. God put him in the world, and he has no business trying to run away.

Of the many Christians who have shirked this duty in the past perhaps the most famous was Simeon the stylite or pillar-saint. In his boyhood Simeon was a shepherd. Now the life of a shepherd, though rather solitary, was not nearly solitary

enough for him. So he went to a convent and stayed there for nine years without ever leaving the grounds. Yea, unbelievable though it may sound, in the course of those nine years he never once set foot outside the four walls of his narrow cell. But Simeon was not yet satisfied. The monastery did not afford him enough opportunity for self-denial, and so he went into the desert and set up a pillar, nine feet high, on the top of which he made his home. Even then Simeon thought he was too near the earth, and little by little he lengthened the pillar until finally it reached the height of sixty feet. The top was only four feet in diameter, and a railing surrounded it to keep him from falling off. He wore a goat-skin coat, and around his neck he carried an iron collar that cut his flesh. Thus he spent the last thirty years of his miserable earthly existence.

Tennyson, poet laureate of England, has put this prayer on the lips of *St. Simeon of the Pillar*:

"Bethink Thee, Lord, while Thou and all the saints
Enjoy themselves in heaven, and men on earth
House in the shade of comfortable roofs,
Sit with their wives by fires, eat wholesome food,
And wear warm clothes, and even beasts have stalls—
I 'tween the rise and downfall of the light
Bow down one thousand and two hundred times
To Christ, the Virgin Mother, and the saints;

Or in the night, after a little sleep,
I wake: the chill stars sparkle; I am wet
With drenching dews, or stiff with crackling frost.
I wear an undress'd goatskin on my back;
A grazing iron collar grinds my neck;
And in my weak, lean arms I lift the cross,
And strive and wrestle with Thee till I die:
O mercy, mercy! wash away my sin!"

Do you think this man was a wonderful saint? He was not. He thought he was; likely he meant to be; but he wasn't.

Do you know what St. Simeon of the Pillar was doing? He was "playing hooky." Life is a school; contact with the world is a school. Anyone that tries to run away from the world is "skipping school."

Doesn't God tell us that we are the salt of the earth? How can salt act as a preservative if it does not come in contact with the thing to be preserved? You want to preserve a piece of meat by salting it. Put the meat here and the salt there, and you have accomplished nothing. The salt must be rubbed into the meat. Likewise the Christian must be in contact with the world in order to preserve it.

The Old Testament tells of a prophet who "played hooky." It was Jonah, who, instead of obeying God's command to preach to the Ninevites, ran away. We know what happened to him. Let us not follow his evil example.

D

We now come to a turn in the argument.

Says Paul: "I wrote unto you not to company with fornicators: yet not altogether." He means to say: "You must have some contact with the world; I don't assert that you may have no contact at all with the world; I don't tell you that you must altogether steer clear of worldly people. But do be careful!"

It is an obvious implication of our text that there are limits which the Christian must observe in his contact with the world. We suggest a few.

In the first place, he may have no fellowship with the sins of the world.

As has already been said, you may have an unbeliever as your partner in business. Whether this is advisable I shall not attempt to decide. But in the abstract it surely is permissible. But if you know that your partner practices dishonesty and you profit by his dishonesty, then you have fellowship with his sin. That, of course, is dead wrong.

We come to a second limitation.

Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians has much to say about it. Let me remind you that Corinth was a big city, and the city problems of those days did not differ so very much from the city problems of today. In fact, the church at Corinth had

pretty much the same difficulties with which this congregation is contending now. In his two letters to the Corinthians the apostle discusses some of these problems. Now in the sixth chapter of the second epistle he has something very important to say on the subject in hand. He declares that in matters of religion there can be no cooperation between the child of God and the child of the world. When it comes to religion, they differ very much from each other; they differ radically; they have no common standing ground.

The apostle's trumpet gives forth no uncertain sound when he declares: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said: 'I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.' 'Wherefore come out from among them and be ye separate,' saith the Lord."

In matters of religion, then, the absolute antithesis between the Christian and the world precludes cooperation.

For this reason, we believe, Christians

should not be members of organizations, secret or otherwise, which are avowedly religious, but whose religion is not the Christian.

James 4:4 states a third limitation. Says the Lord's brother: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God." We may associate with the world; we may have fellowship with the world to some extent, but we may never be friends of the world. We often use the word *friendship* in a very loose sense. Not so James. He must have had in mind something specific. Likely he thought of Jesus' words to the eleven: "I call you no longer servants, but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have declared unto you." A friend is a person before whom one pours out his heart, whom one tells everything. In that sense the Christian and the worldling may never be friends. Neither can they be.

Here is a reason, by the way, why it is a veritable calamity for a Christian to marry a non-Christian. Husband and wife should be more than friends to each other. But the Christian cannot be so much as a friend of the world.

There has been much talk in certain Christian circles of isolation. We have

heard it said over and over: "In our isolation lies our strength." But that is a sweeping statement which cannot altogether stand. I would much rather say: "In our insulation lies our strength." Not *isolation* but *insulation* is the word.

If electricity were isolated from this building, we would now be seated in darkness. That would not be desirable. But it is a mighty good thing that the electric wires leading to this building are insulated. If they were not, the current would likely be short-circuited long before reaching the church, and then also we would be without light. So in this case isolation is no good, but insulation is essential.

You and I should not be isolated from the world. If we were, we could not let our light shine before men. But you and I should be insulated from the world. That is to say, we should retain our identity in the world. We should be in the world but never of it. Only then can we be shining lights in a dark place.

Not in *isolation* but in *insulation* lies our strength.

And that brings us to the last point of our discourse.

Don't, don't let your contacts with the world crowd out your contacts with God. There is real danger of that. Some of us, I fear, are so busy with worldly people and

things that they almost forget God. Don't ever let that happen!

Jesus didn't live an isolated life. He was in contact with the world. He associated very freely with even publicans and sinners. But once in a while, nay, twice in a while, he would go all alone to the top of a desert mountain, and there would spend the livelong night with God, his Father, in solitary prayer. He never lost contact with God. He took pains to keep it up.

Paul was not at all an isolationist. He associated freely with men of every type. Was he not the great apostle to the gentile world? But before beginning his ministry he spent three years in the lonely desert of Arabia in close communion with God.

Divers go clear to the bottom of the ocean. How is it possible for men to do it and live? You know the answer. A hose leading from the top of the bell to the surface of the water supplies the diver with oxygen. Thus he can live at the bottom of the deep, deep sea.

You and I live in a wicked world which is far from God. We are in danger of being smothered to death. But if only we keep up our contact with heaven and the God of life who dwells there, this will never happen.

"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers and shut thy doors about thee!"

DIFFERING FROM THE WORLD

A True Aristocrat

II

DIFFERING FROM THE WORLD

A True Aristocrat

> "And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."—Romans 12:2

LET me first of all say as definitely as possible what is meant by the term *world* in our text. This word has many different shades of meaning in Scripture, and sometimes its exact sense is hard to determine. But our text offers no difficulty in this respect. Manifestly the apostle is here thinking of *human society alienated from God.*

The burden of our text is that Christians must differ from the world in this sense. Our subject then is: DIFFERING FROM THE WORLD.

What we have to say on this subject comes under three heads, expressed by the three key-words of our text:

A. *Conformation.*

B. *Transformation.*

C. *Probation.*

A

It goes entirely without saying that the form of a thing is its outward appearance. So, when the apostle tells us that we should not be conformed to the world, he must mean that our outward appearance should differ from that of the world. People should be able to tell that we are different from godless society by looking at us.

The question at once arises in what respect our appearance should differ from that of godless society. Now that is a pretty hard question to answer. There are several things which complicate it. Let me enumerate some of them.

At the time when the apostle wrote these words to the Christians at Rome, the line of demarcation between the church and the world was very much sharper than it is in so-called Christian America today. Some Christians deplore this change, and that there is something deplorable about it cannot be denied. Yet there is a perfectly good reason for it too. Society at that time was out and out pagan, and that fortunately cannot be said of America today. Christianity has exerted considerable influence on our nation. For instance, at that time everything went on full-blast in Rome on the Sabbath. This is by no means the case among us today. And so in many ways the lives of the men and women of the world

as we know it are not quite so wicked as they would be had they never come in contact with Christianity. That is an important reason why the demarcation between the Christian and the world is not as distinct today as it was in Paul's day.

Styles change, and it is proper that they should. But here let me make a statement that may surprise some of you a bit. Obviously, some things that were considered worldly a generation or even a decade ago are not considered so today. Nobody will care to dispute that. But now listen! Some styles which actually *were* worldly a generation ago *are* no longer worldly today. That is not so obvious at first blush. So let me prove it.

No, I am not compromising with sin. Transgression of the commandments of God ever has been sin and always will be. Yet the above statement can stand.

We will be agreed that, if a woman ten years ago had appeared on the streets of Grand Rapids in the dress that perfectly respectable women wear today, we would have been shocked. Christians would have raised their hands in holy horror, and justly so. Perhaps even the police patrol might have been pressed into service. So dress that is *considered* proper today was *thought* worldly a decade ago.

I dare add that in some cases dress that

would actually have *been* worldly at that time *is* proper now. Let no one think that I am defending extreme modern styles. I consider them utterly despicable. But it can hardly be denied that a woman can wear a shorter skirt today than a decade ago without becoming guilty of worldliness.

We come to a third difficulty. Hardly anybody will care to contend that Christians should look different from the world in every detail. We don't have to wear distinctive dress as some Quakers do. Nor do we have to follow the same Quakers in affecting certain peculiarities of speech. You have probably heard of the Friend who said to his wife: "It seems to me, Maggie, that all men are queer except thee and me, and sometimes methinks even thou art a little queer." Christians don't have to be queer.

Again, there are a number of people who insist on differing from others because they are contrary. I heard of a man the other day who stepped into a store to buy himself a hat. Of course the clerk tried to sell him a derby. Said he: "Everybody is getting one; you'll have to buy one eventually; why not now?" The customer replied: "And that's exactly the reason why I don't want one." I know a man who insists on wearing top shoes though everybody else wears oxfords. The same man is

almost sure to vote *No* at a meeting when everybody else votes *Yes*. The question at issue doesn't seem to make much difference to him. Now I would not say that a person who is somewhat contrary might not be a Christian, but I insist that contrariness is not Christianity. One might differ from the world just to be contrary, and be worldly at heart.

But we ought to be able to draw a line somewhere. I shall do it by stating an important principle. It answers the question how far we should differ in outward appearance from worldly people. *We ought to differ from the men and women of modern godless society in those things that are characteristically and distinctively worldly.*

Our text is taken from the epistle of Paul to the church at Rome. Rome at that time was a cesspool of immorality. It was known as the moral sewer of the world. Not exactly the same thing perhaps, yet something of the kind, may be said also of modern society. One only has to glance at our modern dances and the billboards in front of our theaters to become convinced.

Now you and I ought to differ from the world on that score. We must take heed lest we be swept off our feet by the mighty tidal wave of present-day immorality. We should be holy before the Lord.

There is another sin which is characteristic of our age. It is that of irreverence or sacrilege. How much sacrilege is there not in our funny papers and comic strips! They are full of it. I am grieved to say that this sin has made considerable headway in our own circles. The sacrilege which is "pulled off" under the guise of wit and humor at some of our banquets is simply appalling. I imagine that some of the stories told even by men of the cloth would "make a hit" in vaudeville. This is worldliness of the worst kind.

We Christians ought to differ from the people of the world in those things which are positively sinful.

We must go a big step farther. Too great interest in certain things, not sinful in themselves, may constitute worldliness. That is something we may well be reminded of. Let me illustrate.

Money is a necessity, and most of us have to work hard to make enough. But if we are so intent on business that we neglect religion, we have become conformed to the world.

We all need a little amusement; we are entitled to it. But if you and I make amusement an end instead of a means, if we live for pleasure, if we are pleasure-mad, like so many round about us, then we have become positively worldly.

There is a difference of opinion among Christians about the propriety of playing cards and other games in which the element of chance is prominent. Some condemn it outright as an abuse of divine providence. Others see no harm in an occasional game of Flinch or Rook, let us say. If it be granted that the latter view is tenable, even then it remains true that he who spends so much time at these games that he has little or none left for the reading of Christian literature has become conformed to the world.

Some of us like a party once in a while, perhaps even twice in a while. So does any sociable being. But if we go to so many that we neglect the religious training of our children at home, then we are positively worldly in that respect.

Paul says that we should not be conformed to the world. Do you know what mistake some Christians are making? It is a capital one. They want to resemble the world as closely as possible without becoming out and out worldly. They want to be Christians. They want to go to heaven when they die. Most assuredly! But, while they hope to spend eternity with the saints, for the present they rather prefer the company of sinners.

That is a dangerous game. It is something like the game which boys play on

rubber ice. A pond is frozen over with a thin sheet of ice. It is so thin that it bends when one puts his weight on it. That's why it is called rubber ice. What fun the boys have sliding on it and taking a chance on plunging through! A certain Mr. Blandon is reputed to have walked over the Niagara Falls on a tight rope. The foolhardiness of the boys and of Mr. Blandon is hardly comparable with that of the church-member who, by conforming somewhat to the world, risks his soul.

The worst remains to be said. Let me assure you that if you want to be just as worldly as possible without losing your soul, then you are not a Christian at heart and you are sure to lose your soul. The real Christian does not want to be worldly at all.

Do you realize what was the big mistake of the children of Israel in ancient times? Fools that they were, they aped the other nations. They wanted kings because the other peoples had them. They wanted to serve idols because their neighbors did. Everybody was doing it, you know. Now isn't that precisely what many of us are doing today? Everybody is doing this or that; so we want to do it too.

But oh, what a mistake for God's people to make! The Israelites trod in the mire the highest honor that God has ever be-

stowed on any people on the face of the earth. He made Israel his chosen race, his peculiar people, a royal priesthood. But they would have nothing of it. God forbid that we should despise the covenant blessings and sell our birthright for a mess of pottage!

The Christian is a spiritual aristocrat. He is a child of the King, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Potentate of potentates, before whom all the great men of the earth are less than a drop in the ocean wide, than a dust particle on the balances. True aristocrats do not follow after the common herd. Neither does the genuine Christian ape the world. He is a prince.

Do you know what kind of men and women we need nowadays in the church of Christ? Men and women who dare to stand alone: Daniels.

> "Dare to be a Daniel;
> Dare to stand alone;
> Dare to have a purpose true;
> Dare to make it known!"

In the words of Milton, we must show "the courage that hates the cowardice of doing wrong." When everybody else says *Yes*, we must dare to utter that little word, than which there is no harder to pronounce: *No!*

Have you ever heard the story of the eighteen year old soldier who used to bend his knees in prayer every night right in the

presence of his comrades? They sneered and jeered at him, threw pillows and shoes at him, mocked and ridiculed him. Then one day this young Daniel was killed in battle. The ringleader of his persecutors brought the body into camp and said: "Boys, I felt that I could not leave him there; I just had to bring him in." One of the buddies carved his name on a wooden slab and another suggested that he add the words "A Christian Soldier." When the body was lowered into a grave, hard men stood by with bared heads and tear-stained cheeks.

If you want to gain the respect of the world, dare to differ!

We don't need jellyfish. The church is full of them already. What the church of Christ needs is men, men with a backbone, men of God, Christians!

B

We have dwelt at length on the word *Conformation.* We must hurry on to *Transformation,* the second key-word of our text. We should not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind.

Transformation means a lot more than reformation. Reformation means doing a thing over, and doing it better the second

time. Transformation is something much more radical. It designates a complete change, a metamorphosis.

We come to a matter of exceeding significance. The transformation of which the apostle speaks and which he enjoins upon us is the fruit of the renewal of the mind. He says: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

There are those who go through the forms of religion without having experienced a real change of mind. The Pharisees of Jesus' day did it. They offered long prayers in public, they fasted and wore wry faces, they gave alms before men, they carried phylacteries on their sleeves and would read the word of God while walking the streets. But they had not experienced a change of heart. They were not children of God, but of the devil. The mere acceptance of certain forms of religion does not make one a Christian any more than an African bush-man, by washing off his grease and ochre and dirt and by dressing in clean linen and broadcloth, will become a European.

The renewal of the mind is the work of God. Man cannot effect it. The Word of God tells us, and it has become a proverb among all nations, that man cannot change his nature. "You can't expel nature with a fork," said the ancient Roman. "What

is bred in the bone won't come out of the flesh," says the Englishman. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil," declared the inspired Hebrew prophet.

Natural man is in the same position as the poor paralytic who had lain at the pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight long years. Have you ever stopped to think of the awful fix this man was in? An angel of the Lord came down once a year and stirred the water of the pool, and the first man to get in would be cured. Now this man had had thirty-eight chances but had missed them all. No wonder! In order to be cured he had to do that thing which he could not possibly do until he was cured. Did you get that? In order to be cured of his paralysis, he had to get into the water. But he could not get into the water because of his paralysis. So in order to be cured he had to do what he could not do until he was cured. And that is exactly the position of natural man.

The renewal of the mind is not merely a single act of God; it becomes a continuous process. Our minds must be renewed daily so long as we live. And, while it is true that even after receiving the grace of regeneration we remain wholly dependent on God, it may not be forgotten that we

must now cooperate with God. We must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Especially must we be active in prayer. Did not the Savior say: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him"?

This change of mind is sure to result in a transformation of life, for out of the heart are the issues of life.

"One ship turns east, and another west,
With the selfsame winds that blow;
'Tis the set of the sails, and not the gales
That tells us the way to go.

Like the winds of the sea are the waves of fate,
As we voyage along through life;
'Tis the set of the soul that decides the goal,
And not the calm or the strife."

If your mind is renewed, you will talk differently from the men and women of the world. Your speech will betray you. You will not use unclean language. You will never use God's name in vain. You will avoid even such expressions as *Gosh* and *for heaven's sake,* for they are just minced oaths.

If you have a renewed mind, it will show in your amusements. This does not mean that you will never play any of the games which your worldly neighbors play. It does

mean that you will play in a different spirit. And, surely, you will not be a frequenter of the modern theater with its immorality and sacrilege; nor will the suggestive modern dance appeal to you.

Again, if you have a renewed mind, this will be evident in your dress. I hate to talk about women's dress. To do so seems almost beneath the dignity of the pulpit. But I remember that both Peter and Paul said something on this subject in their letters. Let me quote the latter: "That women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety."

The Greek word which is translated *transformed* in our text occurs just three times in the New Testament. Let us study it in the light of the other two instances. It is used in the story of the transfiguration of Jesus on the mount. We are told that Jesus was *transfigured* before the disciples. Heavenly radiance shone from him. And it is found in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." Now both of these passages speak of glorification. The conclusion is warranted that the transformation of our text also results in glorification.

Here let me say something that may seem foolish at first blush. But there is nothing

foolish about it. Do you want to be good looking? I am sure all the women in the audience want to be, and even the men are not wholly indifferent to good looks. The Word of God tells us how we may become marvelously good looking, glorious even. You don't have to go to the beauty shop. You don't need paint or lipstick. I have seen women come from the beauty shop, so homely, so ugly, that I would not touch them with tongs. But the renewal of the mind by the Spirit of God makes for beauty of the rarest kind, for glory. I have observed men and women who were not at all gifted with natural beauty, but had the glory of the Lord spread over their faces because they had the Spirit of God in their hearts.

Moses at one time was on Mt. Horeb in the presence of God for forty days and as many nights. When he came down, the glory of the Lord shone from his face so brightly that the children of Israel could not look steadfastly at him. Some such thing happens to all whose minds are renewed. For the face is the mirror of the soul.

There comes to my mind a story by Henry James. It is entitled *Roderick Hudson.* Roderick Hudson is an American artist who goes to Rome. There he leads a wicked life. His mother at home keeps

praying for her son. After a time she visits him in Rome. As soon as he comes into her presence, he exclaims: "Why mother, what has happened to you? How different you look! You have grown beautiful!" She is not aware of the change that has come over her and says: "All I have been doing is to pray, pray, pray for you, my son." The young artist replies: "I don't think much of prayer, but it can make one beautiful. Mother, there are fine lines in your face."

In Milton's words,

> "Oft converse with heavenly habitants
> Begins to cast a beam on the outward shape,
> The unpolluted temple of the mind."

C

We get the word *Probation* from *prove* in our text. Says Paul: "That ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

The term *probation* is used in several ways, but it always expresses the general idea of ascertaining or making sure. Now Paul tells us: "If you are transformed by the renewing of your minds, then you will know for certain what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Presently we receive a flood of light, of

unexpected light, on all our moral problems.

The world is full of problems. So is the church. So are our hearts. "May I do this? May I do that? I wonder whether this would be all right. I wonder whether that would be wrong. I wonder whether it is permissible to take snapshots on Sunday afternoons. I wonder whether it is wrong on a beautiful Sabbath afternoon to take just a little ride into the country. I wonder whether I may play this or that game. I wonder, I wonder." That is the way people talk.

Ah, stop your wondering! Stop your wondering! Really, I mean it. There is something the matter with you if you wonder all the time about such things. Follow the advice of our text. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will *know positively* what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Some people are everlastingly asking the minister about such things as were just suggested. Not infrequently I find that faithfulness to my calling as a New Testament minister requires that I refuse to answer the questions in detail. There are those who would like to have the Synod or some other body prepare a book of rules which would state just what may and what

may not be done. It would not make any particular difference if such a set of rules were drawn up. Do you think it would change anybody? Do you think it would make men good? You know it would not.

It is perfectly evident why the renewing of one's mind will solve all moral problems. If our minds are renewed, we have the mind of God. Consequently we *know* what God wants us to do and what not. Somewhat differently expressed, our minds are renewed by the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit of knowledge and wisdom, he teaches us God's will.

Yea, he does more than that. Many of our problems arise from unwillingness rather than ignorance. Or rather, our unwillingness makes us ignorant. If a man does not want to do God's will, he cannot see it clearly. The perverted will blinds the intellect. But God's Spirit makes us willing to obey and thus dispels the darkness of our minds.

In a word, the Spirit opens our eyes to the fact that our own will is very corrupt, but that God's will is good, acceptable, and perfect; good indeed, wholly acceptable, and absolutely perfect. Fully convinced of that, we gladly renounce our own will and do God's.

Now we also see clearly that the will of God is incomparably preferable to the will of the world. To quote Calvin: "The world persuades itself that those works which it has devised are good; Paul exclaims, that what is good and right must be ascertained from God's commandments. The world praises itself, and takes delight in its own inventions; but Paul affirms, that nothing pleases God except what he has commanded. The world, in order to find perfection, slides from the word of God into its own devices; Paul, by fixing perfection in the will of God, shows, that if any one passes over that mark he is deluded by a false imagination." And with Paul we agree, for the Spirit which led him to write our text dwells also in us.

I wonder whether all of us have really opened wide the door of our heart unto the Spirit. Sometimes even Christians fail to give the Holy Spirit full sway over their heart and life. They resist the Holy Spirit of God and grieve him. Of course, if you are doing that, you must not expect the Spirit to show you what is right and what is wrong. Then you silence the Spirit. The result will be hopeless confusion.

Let us yield willingly to the gracious influence of the Spirit. Then we shall be

taught of God. We shall understand the mysterious apostolic statement that we know all things. God will, so to speak, take us into his confidence. He will walk with us and talk with us; and we shall walk and talk with him.

"The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him."

ENJOYING THE WORLD

A Healthy Human

III

ENJOYING THE WORLD

A Healthy Human

> "And they that use this world as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away."
>
> —I Corinthians 7:31

SCHOLARS are agreed that the translation of our text may be improved on. It is better to substitute *using to the full* for *abusing.* Then we read: "And they that use this world as not using it to the full; for the fashion of this world passeth away."

This slight alteration in its rendering brings our text into harmony with the preceding context, where we read: "It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not."

A simple definition of the term *world* as used in our text is in order.

Obviously it has another meaning here than in the text of the preceding sermon. When the apostle admonishes us not to be conformed to the world, he has in mind

godless society. When he tells us that we may use the world, he must be thinking of something quite different. By *world* here is meant *the whole circle of earthly things which are innocent in themselves and even desirable.* The term has no evil connotation.

Our text speaks in a positive way and a negative. We are taught that:

A. *To use this world is perfectly proper.*

B. *To use it to the full is perfectly foolish.*

A

It is easy to understand that the proper use of the world is unobjectionable and even commendable. Elsewhere the apostle Paul tells us that every gift of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.

The Pharisaic principle "touch not, taste not, handle not" was in direct opposition to this teaching of the Word of God. The Anabaptists of the Reformation age also shied at our text. And it must be added that the Christian church has not been thoroughly purged of Pharisaic and Anabaptistic leaven to this day.

There are a few Christians who are inclined to reason as follows: "Money is

really filth; of course, we need a little of it, we cannot get along altogether without it, but would that we could! Luxuries should not be used by Christians; they ought to get along with the bare necessities of life. Such things as necklaces, beads, and jewelry of any description are idols. A college education is an exceedingly dangerous thing. Science, literature, and the fine arts are instruments of Satan by which he leads young people astray. To play baseball is positively worldly."

We shall take pains to prove that this view of life is very unhealthy. It is not pious, as is often supposed, but rather impious. This may be shown in some half a dozen ways.

In the first place, to seek to avoid using the world is contrary to the Word of God. I Timothy 4:4, "Every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving," was already quoted. And how very explicit is our text! Now whatever is contrary to the Bible, no matter how good, how pious, how wise it may seem, is wrong. As soon as a person becomes more pious than the Word of God tells him to be, he has ceased being pious. He has joined company with the Pharisee of the parable who boasted of fasting twice a week, much oftener than God's law required.

To attempt to get along without the world is contrary also to common sense. Somebody has called the Christian religion "the acme of common sense." Of course, there is much more to Christianity than that. It far transcends common sense. But it does not run contrary to it. Asceticism does. Even the hermit in the back woods cannot get along without the world altogether. He has need of at least a hut for shelter, some clothes, and a little food. Nobody is quite so foolish as to refuse flatly to use the world at all.

Asceticism is not the ideal of Christianity. Some people think it is, but it isn't. The Bible does recommend abstinence from good things under certain circumstances. In several places in the New Testament fasting is suggested to Christians. But nowhere in the Word are we taught that asceticism is the ideal of Christian living. John the Baptist was sort of an ascetic; he came neither eating nor drinking. But Jesus, the perfect man, did both. He often attended banquets, where considerable eating and drinking are wont to be done. Once, at least, he was present at a wedding. And when the supply of wine ran short on that occasion, he miraculously provided a bountiful store of it.

We come to something exceedingly serious. Those who tell us that we may hardly

use the world are guilty of the sin of very base ingratitude. God has given us all the good things of the world that we may enjoy them. He who refuses to enjoy them is an ingrate. Suppose that your husband gave you a fur coat last Christmas. Likely he didn't; but let us suppose that he did. What will he think if you never wear it? At first he may surmise that you like it so well that you want to save it. But if you *never* use it, he will be forced to the conclusion that you don't care about his gift. How well I recall the first time that I preached as a student. I was to dine at the home of a deacon. The hostess had prepared a splendid meal. But for sheer nervousness I could not eat. How hurt she felt! She thought me very unappreciative. Now if we wilfully refuse to use the good things that God showers upon us, we are guilty of ingratitude. It is a sin of omission, but a very heinous one.

Something worse remains to be said. Would you know why God gives us all good things? Not just that we may enjoy them, but that we may use them to his honor. In all his works God purposes his own glorification. He wants us to use the world to that greatest of all ends. If we avoid using it, we are depriving him of the honor that is due to his holy name. That is a most grievous sin.

We want to put forth another argument against the doctrine of "touch not, taste not, handle not." It is a positively dangerous teaching. Does not history show that he who would refrain just as far as possible from the use of the world in order to avoid worldliness, may presently find himself steeped in the very worst types of worldliness? That is the way it usually works out. The Pharisees of Jesus' day became covetous; and covetousness is a bad form of worldliness. The Dutch Anabaptists of Reformation days once staged on the streets of Amsterdam so shameful a parade that we purposely refrain from all description. And many a monastery and convent has degenerated into a house of ill fame.

Perhaps you wonder why it is that asceticism so often leads to sensuality. Let me attempt an explanation. All men have certain natural desires, God-given instincts. We have, for instance, an appetite for food and drink, a desire for play; we have also, to be frank, the sexual instinct. Now we can do one of three things with these natural desires. We may crush them, we may give them free play, or we may control them. The last is the proper thing to do. Don't crush your natural desires! God gave them to you. You have no right to undo God's work. Don't give your natural desires free play! They will get the better

of you and destroy you. But control them in accordance with God's holy law!

May I illustrate? Natural desires have sometimes been compared to an unbroken colt. A man wants to try and ride it. There are three things he may do. He may kill the colt. Then he can sit on its back all he wants, but he won't ride very far. He may give the colt free play. Then there is grave danger that he will be thrown and break his neck. The best thing, the only sensible thing to do is to control the colt, to "break" it, as people say. That done, the man may ride safely.

This is not a bad illustration of our duty with reference to our natural desires. And yet it does not altogether fill the bill. The reason is obvious. One can kill a colt, but it is impossible to kill one's natural desires. He who tries it will find that sooner or later, most likely sooner, they will assert themselves with a vengeance. The result is sensuality.

Enough has been said about asceticism. It is positively unchristian. I don't say that people who are inclined to this view cannot be Christians. That is an altogether different matter. Far be it from us to pass judgment on men. But their view of life is unchristian. Nor is it entirely out of place to warn the ascetic lest he lose his soul. His error is a very dangerous one

which has dragged many a man down to perdition.

Some of us have read that great poem, Dante's *Inferno.* You will recall that on his journey through the underworld the poet came to a stagnant, stinking, putrid fen where were buried in the mud the souls of those who had lived a gloomy, cheerless life. As punishment they had to mutter continuously:

> "We were sad
> In the sweet air made gladsome by the sun,
> Now in this miry darkness are we sad."

Is there not a warning here for us?

B

We come to the second part of our text. To use the world is perfectly proper, *but to use it to the full is perfectly foolish.*

This the apostle would stress. It is obvious that the emphasis does not fall on the first part of our text, but on the second. "And they that use this world as not using it to the full," says Paul. The emphasis falls on *not using it to the full.* We are not told that, while we should avoid using the world to the full, we ought by all means to use it as much as is permissible. The point is that, while we surely may use the

world, we should be mighty careful not to use it to the full.

How wise is this emphasis! It may be said without fear of contradiction that the majority of us are in greater danger of over-using the world than of under-using it. And the former is at least as unhealthy as the latter.

What does the apostle mean when he speaks of using the world to the full? A couple of illustrations will help to answer this question. A Christian in business may not engage in dishonest practices. Certainly not. But that is not the point here. The point is that the Christian should be careful not to become too deeply interested in his business. The apostle does not say that young people at play may not cheat. Of course, they may not. But, once more, that is not the point here. Young people should restrain themselves lest they go wild about their play.

Perhaps it is time now for some of us to revise their definition of worldliness. Don't miss this point, please! I fear that to the minds of at least a few of us worldliness consists of just about three things: theatre-going, dancing, and card-playing. That to them is pretty nearly the sum total of worldliness. To put it somewhat differently, apart from the question whether the trio of popular amusements just named

need be condemned unqualifiedly, there are those who would define worldliness as engaging in the wicked practices of worldly people. Now that certainly *is* worldliness. But how inadequate is this view of the matter! It does not cover the ground at all. One may conceivably never do anything that is positively sinful in itself and yet be quite worldly. To enjoy to the limit things in themselves innocent may already constitute worldliness.

Let me illustrate again.

Here is a man, a member of the church, who would not think of setting a foot inside a theater and forbids his children even to look at the bill-boards in front of the movies. Well and good. But it so happens that this man is stingy; he doesn't give nearly as much as he ought for the kingdom of God. That man is worldly. Whether he admits it or not, and whether he knows it or not, he is worldly.

Here is a young man that leads a fine Christian life to all outward appearances. He goes to catechism and to church very regularly. He doesn't drink or smoke or play cards. But he thinks basket-ball day and night. Even when seated in worshipful posture in God's house, he cannot keep his mind off this game. He is guilty of worldliness.

Here is a young lady, a splendid girl.

She would not think of dancing. She refuses to learn. But she is so much engrossed with the study of music as to neglect her religious duties. She has no time for catechism, for instance. This young lady is in one respect at least using the world to the full.

In one of his wonderful parables the Lord Jesus has given a striking illustration of using the world to the full. Once upon a time a man had a great feast prepared for his friends, and the invitations were sent out. But they gave various excuses for not coming. One said: "I would come, but I have bought a yoke of oxen and must try them out." Another expressed his regrets thus: "I have just bought a farm and must inspect it." Still another remarked: "I have just married a wife; I can't come." Now listen! There is no wrong in buying a team of oxen and trying them out. None at all. There is nothing wrong about buying a farm and inspecting it. Certainly not. And marriage is one of the greatest benefits that God has bestowed on mankind. But these people were engrossed with these matters to such an extent that they refused to come to the feast. And how significant that the feast represents the kingdom of God! They were so deeply interested in the things of time and the world that in their lives the things of eternity and the

kingdom were relegated to the background. Thus they became guilty of a gross form of worldliness.

Even the ancient Greeks, pagans though they were, used to say, "Nothing too much." That was sound advice.

We must now face a very difficult question. Just where does the proper use of the world stop and its too intense use begin?

I hope you don't expect me to answer this question by laying down a set of rules. I don't intend to do anything of the kind. But it may be answered by stating a principle. The principle is suggested by our text. Says the apostle: "Those that use this world as not using it to the full, *for the fashion of this world passeth away.*"

The fashion of *this* world passes away. It is plainly implied that there is *another* world the fashion of which does not pass away. *This* one is temporal, the *other* eternal. Now the principle is simply this: *We should always regard the affairs of this world in relation to the other world; we should view the things of time in the light of eternity.* He who does this is in no danger of over-using this world.

The apostle speaks of the *fashion* of this world. The Greek word which has been rendered *fashion* is also used to designate stage scenery. How beautiful stage scenery

often is! And how permanent it frequently looks! But how very suddenly may it not change! The curtain falls, just a few moments later it rises again, and an entirely new scene confronts the audience. So suddenly the world as we see it now will make room for another.

When is that going to happen? When will the fashion of this world pass away? At Christ's second coming? Yes, to be sure. But sooner even! The curtain is going to fall for you and then rise at the very moment of your death. Verily, the apostle is right when he says in the context: "The time is short."

This world is passing away. It is in process of passing right along. There is nothing stable about it. So are you dying right along. Ah, people tell you that you are going to die. True enough. But you are dying right now. We all are dying men and dying women at this very moment. The germs of death are working in us incessantly, and slowly—nay, rapidly—and surely are dragging us down to the grave.

Then comes eternity. What is time in comparison with it? Nothing! Then you will behold the everlasting world. What is this world when compared with it? A soap bubble! Do not set your heart on a bubble! Set it on the eternal city of God!

May I quote a couple of stanzas of that

beautiful poem of Longfellow's, *The Old Clock on the Stairs*? It is a pretty good commentary on the last clause of our text.

"There groups of merry children played,
There youths and maidens dreaming strayed;
O precious hours! O golden prime,
And affluence of love and time!
Even as a miser counts his gold,
These hours the ancient timepiece told,—
'For ever — never!
Never — for ever!'

All are scattered now and fled,
Some are married, some are dead;
And when I ask, with throbs of pain,
'Ah, when shall they all meet again?'
As in the days long since gone by,
The ancient timepiece makes reply,—
'For ever — never!
Never — for ever!'

Never here, forever there,
Where all parting, pain, and care,
And death, and time shall disappear,
Forever there, but never here!
The horologue of eternity
Sayeth this incessantly,—
'For ever — never!
Never — for ever!' "

Let me attempt to drive home the great principle that we must view all the things of this world in the light of eternity. A few very simple illustrations may prove helpful.

Life on earth is a small island encircled by the waters of the ocean of eternity. Here is your little island; the ocean is limitless. You may wander inland a little way. But I beg you never to go so far inland as to get out of hearing distance from the breakers that roll in on the shore. Let them remind you always that you are surrounded by eternity.

A few years ago some friends and I climbed the holy mountain of the Zuni Indians in New Mexico. It was a very difficult climb. Often we had to go on hands and feet. Every once in a while we would grasp a projecting piece of rock. Do you suppose that we kept gazing on these rocks? Of course not. We used them for just a moment and then forgot about them. We were intent on reaching the summit. All the things of time, all the things of this world, are but stepping stones to eternity. We must be intent on reaching the heights.

Says the saintly Matthew Henry: "See to it that the world remains your servant, and never becomes your idol. Let the world be oil on the wheels of your obedience to God—no more." That is quaint but sound advice.

A Christian astronomer once said: "I am bound for the kingdom of heaven and I take the stars on my way."

On a bridge at Fatehpur Sikri in British

India these words are said to be inscribed: "The world is a bridge. Pass over it, but do not build upon it." That, too, is good advice.

Perhaps someone feels like raising an objection here. If we view this temporal life in the light of life eternal, is there not a danger that we shall neglect our business, our earthly duties?

We reply that such would surely be unchristian. "Be fervent in business!" says the Word. But we hasten to add that only he who has learned to use this world with reference to eternity can attend to his business with proper diligence. The reason is obvious. He will do his daily work for God's sake. For that very reason he is bound to do it well. He will do it with a will, with might and main. There is no stronger incentive to fervency in business than that expressed by the simple words *for God's sake.* As George Herbert put it:

"A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps the room as for thy laws
Makes that and th' action fine.

This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold,
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for lesse be told."

Once more, how very foolish to be too deeply interested in this world. It is the

height of folly! He who is satisfied with a treasure on earth, where moth and rust corrupt and where thieves break through and steal, will one day find himself poorer than a church mouse. For the fashion of this world passeth away.

In one of his delightful essays Charles Lamb tells of people who burned up a whole house in order to have the pleasure of eating roast pig. Wasn't that foolish? But it was not nearly so foolish as to take a chance on being assigned to fire unquenchable for the sake of the enjoyment of the fleeting pleasures of this world. That is madness itself.

You know the parable of the rich fool. He had a farm which had yielded a very abundant harvest. His barns were filled to bursting. As he lay in bed one night, he said to himself: "What shall I do? I will break down my old barns and will build new ones, bigger ones, which can contain all my wealth." But God came to him and said: "Thou fool, in this very night thy soul will be required of thee; and what will happen to all thy riches?" He went to bed in this world a rich fool; he woke up in eternity a poor fool.

How will you wake up? Rich or poor? If you set your heart on the things of this world, the fashion of which passes away, you will wake up in the direst poverty. But

if you make sure of having a treasure in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt and where thieves do not break through or steal, if you set your affection on things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, then you will wake up rich indeed!

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

And what need it trouble a man if he lose the whole world and save his soul?

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

A Victorious Soldier

IV

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

A Victorious Soldier

"And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."—I John 5:4

THIS sermon is the fourth of the series NOT OF THE WORLD. The preceding three were based on words of the apostle Paul; this one is to be based on the words of the apostle John which were just read.

In this connection attention should be called to a rather significant fact. John is called the greatest mystic among the apostles. So he was. He just delighted in losing himself in the quietude of loving contemplation. But now observe a remarkable thing! John, perhaps more than any other individual apostle, emphasizes the truth that the Christian life is warfare.

The word *overcometh* of our text suggests warfare, and *victory* presupposes fight. The phrase *to overcome* occurs in John's writings not less than sixteen times, more often than in all the other books of the Bible put together. In view of

his mysticism, we would hardly have expected this.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that, even while referring to the Christian life as warfare, John does not forget his mysticism but remains as much of a mystic as ever. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our *faith*," he says. Now faith links us to God. Faith is the resting of the soul in God.

It appears that one can lead an active Christian life and at once be a mystic. Nay, sound mysticism is essential to the right kind of Christian activity. Still better, the two are identical in last instance: faith *is* the victory.

Our subject is: OVERCOMING THE WORLD. Let us see:

A. *What it means to overcome the world.*

B. *What it is that overcomes the world.*

A

Again we shall have to define the term *world.* In our text it means *the sum total of earthly things which have a tendency to stir desire, to seduce to sin, to draw away from God, and thus to become an obstacle to the cause of Christ.* To be more concrete, the reference is to such things as riches, power, fame, pleasure, social standing.

These especially stir desire, seduce to sin, and draw away from God.

There is a contrast between the worldly man's idea and the Christian's view of what constitutes a victorious and successful life. The two differ radically. Let me attempt to state the difference pointedly.

The worldly conception of success is to obtain as big a lump of money as one can and then squeeze from it the last drop of sweetness. Worldly people are a good deal like a group of boys who have got hold of a piece of chalk and now vie with each other in an attempt to write their names as high as possible on a wall. Each boy will stand on tip-toe in a desperate effort to put his name a little higher than any other. In the eyes of the world the Pershings, the Edisons, the Fords, and the Lindberghs are the ones that have overcome the world.

Be it far from me to detract from the merits of these men and the greatness of their accomplishments! We may well thank God for them. But I do dispute vehemently the opinion that they have overcome the world by their achievements. They haven't at all. To overcome the world is quite a different thing. One might conceivably be the most famous man that ever trod the earth, enjoy the very highest social standing, possess more wealth than Croe-

sus, and exercise greater influence than Augustus, and yet, instead of having overcome the world, be overcome by it.

It is told of Alexander the Great, the world conqueror, that he sat down on the ruins of the last city which he had taken, and wept. One of his officers asked him: "Why do you weep? Is not the world lying at your feet?" Alexander replied: "I weep because there are no more worlds to conquer." He had not conquered the world, but the world had conquered him. The lust for conquest held him in slavery.

When Philip Henry, the famous English nonconformist clergyman, was thirty years old, he wrote in his diary: "So old and no older was Alexander when he conquered the great world; but I have not subdued the little world of *myself*."

Have you heard the story of the soldier who found himself in the following odd predicament? He called out to his superior officer, "I have taken a prisoner." The officer replied, "Bring him along!" The soldier said, "He won't let me." "Well," said the officer, "then come yourself." "I can't," was the response. Don't you see that this soldier, instead of having captured a foe, had really been taken captive himself?

There is a wonderful story in Greek mythology. King Midas of Phrygia obtained

from Dionysos the power of turning whatever he touched into gold. That was his idea of conquering the world. In the morning he walked out into his garden of flowers. He stooped to smell of them, but no sooner had they come in contact with his nose or they were turned into gold. Presently he sat down to breakfast, but hardly had the food touched his lips when it became gold. He rose from the table hungry and disgruntled. His little daughter came into the room, ran over to her father, embraced and kissed him. She was transformed into a golden statue. Then the king realized that the power to change everything he touched into gold had not made him master of the world, but had made the world master of him. He prayed for relief and obtained it by bathing in the river Pactolus.

When the man of the world imagines that he has conquered the world, in reality the world has captivated him.

Let us turn from the worldly conception of a successful and victorious life to the Christian view of the matter. What is the Christian conception of overcoming the world? That question can best be answered in the light of the Savior's declaration: "I have overcome the world." What did Jesus mean? As soon as we have the answer to this question, we shall know

what the Christian means by a successful life.

Jesus spoke these words on Thursday afternoon or evening. On the very next day, Friday, he was going to die. A matter of hours before his death on the cross he declared: "I have overcome the world." Doesn't that seem ridiculous? If any career ever ended in abject failure from the usual viewpoint, it was the earthly life of Jesus. If anyone ever went down to ignominious defeat at the close of his life, to all outward appearances it was the Rabbi of Nazareth.

As for wealth, he could not so much as pay his taxes without first sending Peter to the seashore with fishing tackle, and miraculously putting a coin into the mouth of the first fish that was pulled up. And he gave expression to his poverty as well as his restlessness in the complaint: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay down his head."

As for fame, great multitudes had followed him early in his career; for a long time he was the most popular Rabbi that had ever trodden on Jewish soil; but by this time the crowds had left him and many of his erstwhile followers had turned against him. On the very morrow the crowds

would shriek on Gabbatha: "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

As for social standing, he was numbered with publicans and sinners, gluttons and winebibbers, the offscouring of Jewish society. He was despised and rejected of men. Tomorrow morning he will suffer crucifixion, a penalty exacted only from the most perverse of criminals. His last hours will be spent in the company of murderers.

As for power, he might have become a king; more than once the multitudes stood ready to crown him; but only a few hours from now he is going to be a prisoner in chains. Nay, he will yet be king; but his robe will be the purple of mockery, his crown a wreath of thorns, his sceptre a reed, his throne a cross.

And as for pleasure, he is now on his way to Gethsemane, where he is going to sweat drops of blood; to the Jewish council chamber, where men will spit at him and buffet him about; to Gabbatha, where his back will be lashed until the blood streams down; to Calvary, where await him the torments of *hell.*

Mind you! Mind you! In the face of all that Jesus declared: "I have overcome the world." *And he was right!*

What may he have meant? This: "The desire for riches and for fame and for

social standing and for power and for pleasure has not overcome me! I have overcome it! Presently, in just a few hours, I am going to assert my absolute independence of all these things! I shall be exalted on the cross, whence I shall look down with tranquil scorn on all the things which men call the world! *I have overcome the world!*" He had!

That is the victorious life. That is the successful life from the viewpoint of Christ and the Christian. And that, in essence, is the kind of life you and I will have to lead if we want to overcome the world.

Let me say in a somewhat different way what it means to overcome the world. The immediately preceding context tells us: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." Is it not plainly taught here that to overcome the world is much the same thing as to keep God's commandments?

How obvious a truth! If we keep God's commandments, we are the servants of God. Of course. And if we are the servants of God, we cannot be the servants of the world. That is self-evident. But it is equally evident that, if we are not the world's servants, the world must be our servant. And so it is true that he who

keeps God's commandments has overcome the world.

Now listen! *If we don't overcome the world, the world will overcome us.* Did you get that? One or the other is sure to happen: either you and I are going to conquer the world, or the world is going to conquer us.

Life in the world is like rowing on a river. Either we must make our way up against the current, or we shall be carried down by the current. It is the Christian's duty to row up-stream. As soon as he rests his oars, he is swept down-stream. And that means that he is overcome by the world.

We are overcome by the world when, for fear of men, we fail to confess our Lord. We are overcome by the world when we place pleasure before duty, happiness before holiness. We are overcome by the world when our desire for things material is so strong that it deadens our interest in the things of the Spirit. Just as soon as we lose sight of the fact that the things which are seen are but temporal, whereas the things which are not seen are eternal, we are overcome by the world.

But we overcome the world when we keep God's commandments regardless of whether this brings us wealth or poverty,

fame or shame, social standing or ignominy, power or loss of influence, pleasure or pain.

B

What is it that overcomes the world? "This," says the apostle, "is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith.*"

It is a commonplace to say that doubt leads to defeat. Naturally it does. We may well be reminded of that in this age of doubt in which almost all the fundamentals of the Christian religion are being called into question. Doubt won't get us anywhere. Doubt will never gain us the victory. Doubt invariably issues in defeat.

Carlyle once said: "A man's religion consists not of the many things he is in doubt of and tries to believe, but of the few he is assured of and has no need of effort for believing."

We may add a corollary to our text: this is the victory with which the world overcometh us, even our doubt.

It is also a commonplace that faith or confidence is necessary to victory. In every sphere of human endeavor this is true. Let us say that you are climbing a mountain. If you are afraid, the chances are you will slip and fall; but if you have all kinds of confidence, your chances of reaching the

summit are good. Swimming is almost entirely a matter of confidence. One cannot swim if one is afraid; but he who is fearless can float without any great effort. Some of us are interested in athletics. If you have no confidence at all that you will win a contest, you are almost sure to go down to defeat; whereas a reasonable degree of confidence greatly improves your chances of victory.

However, this kind of confidence has very little bearing on our text. It is usually called self-confidence. But that is not what the apostle had in mind when writing our text. He was referring to faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. That is the faith which overcomes the world.

Let me say in three short sentences how it is that faith overcomes the world.

1. Faith *leads to* victory over the world.

2. Faith *is* the victory that overcomes the world.

3. Faith *has already gained* the victory over the world.

A few words must be said about each of these thoughts.

1. Just what is meant here by *faith*? The next verse tells us. Let us read it in connection with our text. "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our

faith. Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" It is evident that John has in mind very specifically faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

So faith unites with the Son of God. It follows that the believer is linked up with omnipotence. Small wonder that he is assured of victory over the world! The world may be powerful; the almighty Son of God is infinitely more powerful.

It has been said that faith has no power of itself, but derives all its power from its object. This is true. Here is a locomotive pulling a railway coach. The coach is attached to the locomotive by means of a so-called coupling. Is the power that draws the coach in the coupling? Certainly not. It is in the locomotive. But the coupling binds the coach to the locomotive, and through the coupling the locomotive exerts its power on the coach. We may reverently liken the Son of God to the locomotive. He has all power on earth and in heaven. You and I, we may say, are the coach. And faith is the coupling. If it is present, we are linked to omnipotence. We can do all things through Christ, who strengthens us. We can even overcome the world.

I am reminded of a character in the Bible who overcame the world in the very sense of our text. He overcame also in precisely

the manner of our text; namely, through faith. We are all familiar with that wonderful chapter, the eleventh of Hebrews, which contains a long honor roll of heroes of faith. I am thinking of one of them, Moses. Hear what we are told by the inspired writer about him. "By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches that the treasures of Egypt." Surely, he overcame the world. We read on: "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king;"—now listen carefully!—"for he endured as seeing him who is invisible." He saw God as it were, he trusted in God, he was linked up with God Almighty. That gave him power to overcome the world.

In like manner it is faith in the almighty Son of God that empowers us to overcome the world.

2. Not only does faith *lead to* victory, but "this *is* the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith constitutes victory over the world.

What does that mean? Another simple definition of faith will help us find the answer. Faith is the resting of the soul in God. Let us ponder on that a few mo-

ments. Let us absorb this truth. Faith is the resting of the soul in God. Now, obviously, as soon as the soul rests in God it is lifted up high above the things of this world. Then one looks down on the things of this world. How very small, how exceedingly insignificant, they now seem! And that very view of the world constitutes victory over it. Faith *is* the victory.

Alexander Maclaren tells of a great English scholar who looked up at the skies through a telescope, got a broad sweep of the heavens, and then, turning away from the instrument, made this almost ludicrous remark: "I don't think much of our country estates." How small are the English estates when compared with the heavens! How infinitesimal is this world in the eyes of him who rests in God, the Infinite!

Just as soon as your soul rests in God, beloved, you have gained the victory over the world. Then you sing:

> "Whom have I, Lord, in heaven but thee,
> To whom my thoughts aspire?
> And having thee, on earth is naught
> That I can yet desire."

3. I read our text from the authorized version. The American revised version gives a somewhat different reading, which is a little more accurate. It says: "This is the victory that *hath overcome* the world,

even our faith." That brings us to our last thought. He who has faith not only *will overcome* the world, nor is he merely *in process of overcoming* the world, but he actually *has overcome* it already. His victory is an accomplished fact.

How is that? No doubt, much might be said on this subject, but we shall be content with one definite answer.

Faith not only unites us with the person of Christ, but also puts us into possession of the benefits which he has merited for us. We appropriate these benefits to ourselves. One of them is the victory over the world of which he spoke when he declared: "I have overcome the world." Christ's victory is the victory of every believer. It follows that we have been victors over the world ever since our blessed Lord spoke these glorious words.

Again we remind you that Jesus announced his victory on Thursday evening, just before his crucifixion on Friday. How significant! When the Savior said: "I have overcome the world," he was thinking of the cross; at that very moment he saw himself hanging on the cross. The cross spelled victory over the world for him. He wanted to be crucified rather than crowned. He looked down with scorn serene on the honor and the glory of the world. Rather than be crowned king of the world, he

would be nailed to the cross. But that very attitude was proof that he had overcome the world. When he was lifted up on the tree, the world lay vanquished at his feet.

That selfsame cross of Christ spells victory over the world for us. On the cross Jesus gained his victory over the world and ours as well.

There is a beautiful legend about the first Christian emperor of Rome, Constantine the Great. In a vision he saw a cross in the sky, and underneath it the words: "In hoc signo vinces," "In this sign thou shalt conquer." He made the cross his ensign and went on from victory to victory.

We, too, must make the cross of Christ our ensign in the fight against the world. Then we shall be assured of ultimate victory. Nay, then we may boast even now that we *are* more than conquerors through him that loved us.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world."

"When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er his body on the tree;
Then am I dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

Can you sing that hymn, and sing it from the heart? Then you have overcome the world.

And then one day your Lord will fulfill unto you that blessed promise, the very climax of his sevenfold promise to all loyal soldiers of the cross: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."

HATED BY THE WORLD

A Happy Martyr

V

HATED BY THE WORLD

A Happy Martyr

> "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."
>
> —John 16:33

WE have in this statement of the Lord Jesus to his disciples:

A. *A terrifying announcement.*

B. *A cheering assurance.*

The terrifying announcement is: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." But the cheering assurance is added: "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

A

Jesus has informed the disciples that he is about to return to the Father. Now he tells them what will happen to them after his departure. He says: "In the world ye shall have tribulation." Surely, this announcement is far from encouraging.

It is important for the proper understand-

ing of our text that we know precisely what Jesus means by *tribulation.*

Let it be understood that the Savior is not speaking of troubles common to all mankind, "the ills that human flesh is heir to." He is not referring to the trials which Eliphaz, the friend of Job, had in mind when he said: "Man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward." *Tribulation* here is very specifically *the persecution which Christ's disciples must expect to suffer at the hands of worldly men.*

In this connection it is well to consider a twofold use of the word *cross.* We employ it in a loose, general sense in the saying: "Every house and every heart has its cross." But Jesus had in mind something much more specific when he declared: "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me." He referred to the trials which are bound to come to his disciples by virtue of their very discipleship.

The reference of our text is the same. Jesus might have said: "In the world ye shall experience religious persecution."

The words of our text were addressed in the first place to the twelve apostles. In their case the prediction obviously came true. According to tradition, all but one of the eleven faithful apostles died martyrs. Only John was saved from a martyr's death, and he escaped by the very skin of his teeth.

He was thrown into a pot of boiling oil, but God intervened miraculously. Then he was banished to the barren isle of Patmos.

It is equally evident that the prophecy of our text was fulfilled in the case of Jesus' followers of the first centuries of the Christian era. The early Christians were thrown by the dozens to the lions in the Roman Colosseum. History tells of ten orgies of persecution by the emperors of Rome. Nero, cruelest of the cruel, ordered the Christians bound in bunches, had pitch and tar poured over their bodies, set fire to them, and thus illuminated the imperial gardens with human torches, while he and his courtiers wallowed in nocturnal bacchanalia.

Again, our forebears of the Reformation age suffered excruciating torture and bloody slaughter at the hands of the world and a worldly church. The mere mention of the Spanish Inquisition and the St. Bartholomew Massacre, which is said to have taken the lives of eight thousand Huguenots in one night, is a sufficient reminder.

In our own day persecution of Christ's disciples is not an uncommon thing. In one of the halls of Princeton Seminary there is a tablet on which are inscribed the names of several graduates or former students of that institution who suffered martyrdom in various mission fields. Beneath their names

one reads the touching words: "Of whom the world was not worthy."

Some six years ago I was accorded the high privilege of administering the sacrament of Christian baptism to five young Indians at the Zuni village in New Mexico. I was assured by the missionaries that from that day they would practically be ostracized from their tribe, they would be considered Zunis no more.

We come to a very pertinent question. Does Jesus' announcement in our text apply to us? Did our Lord mean to say to you and me that *we, you and I,* would suffer persecution in the world? Is it true that we American Christians in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty-nine have tribulation in the world? It doesn't look that way, does it?

Now in answer to that question we must make a very important statement. Here it is: *beyond the shadow of a doubt the terrifying announcement of our text was meant for all Christians of every age and every land. Jesus' follower is bound to have tribulation in the world. He who has none of it simply is not a true disciple. Persecution is a mark of Christianity.*

We want to prove from a few passages of the Word of God that this is the correct interpretation of our text.

"Blessed are ye when men shall revile

you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." That is the last of the eight beatitudes which Jesus uttered on the mount. Do you know that each beatitude is applicable to every Christian? Don't think for a moment that we have in the beatitudes a description of eight types of Christians. Such is not at all the case. But we have here eight marks of every Christian. Every one of them is poor in spirit; every one of them hungers and thirsts after righteousness; everyone of them is merciful; every one of them is pure in heart; and so on. Every last one of them also is reviled and persecuted in the world for the sake of Christ.

Does anybody question that the Master had in mind all his disciples of every age when he declared: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you"?

And how sweeping a statement is this: "If *any man* will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and fol-

low me"! There is no Christian but has a cross to bear, a cross of tribulation in the world.

Yes, my fellow disciples, the terrifying announcement of our text was intended for you and for me. The fact that we are living in so-called Christian America in this year of grace does not essentially alter the truth that the world is sure to hate us.

It goes entirely without saying that persecution of Jesus' followers at the hands of the world assumes different forms in different lands and different times. That may not be forgotten. Time was when Christians were buried alive, burned at the stake, hanged, sawed asunder, thrown to the lions. Such things are not done in America today. But other things, not essentially different, are being done.

It is not an unusual thing for a Christian workingman to be slugged if for scruples of conscience he refuses to join a certain labor union. In at least a few of our big cities this happens every once in a while. I could name men that have lost large sums of money because they refused to transact business on the Lord's Day. It is said, though in the very nature of the case difficult to prove, that in some courts of justice it is exceedingly hard to get a square deal if one is not a member of some worldly organization. How the world gloats over the

sins of church-members! How it delights in blowing up to tremendous proportions the failures of leading men in the church! Sinclair Lewis' *Elmer Gantry* is a striking illustration of this sort of thing. Oh, how the world likes to call us such uncomplimentary names as Pharisees, bigots, impractical fools, narrow-minded pests, ignoramuses! That still happens today, and right here in these United States.

Why is it that Christians in every age and in every land are bound to be persecuted? It is because of what theologians are wont to call *the absolute antithesis* between the Christian and the world. A few remarks on this important subject are in order.

Let no one think that the Christian and the worldling have absolutely nothing in common. They have many things in common. Those of us who have read *The Merchant of Venice* will remember how the Jew Shylock expatiates on it that his people are just as human as all other men. Among other things he asks: "When you tickle us, do we not laugh? When you wound us, do we not bleed?" It may be said also of Jesus' disciples and worldly people that both are human. Again, it is not true that Christians never sin, the Perfectionist to the contrary notwithstanding; nor is it true that worldly men never do any good, cer-

tain well-meaning but erring brethren to the contrary notwithstanding. Christians sin quite often. And worldly men do quite a bit of civic good.

But now listen! In spite of the things that they have in common, in spite of several points of contact between the Christian and the worldling, nevertheless, when it comes right down to the point, in principle, ideally considered, the two stand diagonally opposed to each other. There is between them an absolute antithesis.

The Christian is spiritually alive; the worldling is dead in sins and trespasses. The Christian loves God; the worldling hates him. And how different is their evaluation of things! What you and I consider very valuable the world thinks of no account at all, and what the world thinks very valuable you and I hold of little account. The things which are seen are temporal and of little value to us, but not so to the world. The things which are not seen are eternal and of infinite value to us, but the world thinks nothing of them.

It follows that, when the child of the world and the child of God do the same thing, they yet do different things. That is a paradox, but it is true. Let us say that a Christian and a worldling are seated at the same table at the same hour, eating the same food, drinking the same drink, and

doing both at the same rate. To all outward appearances they are doing the identical thing. In reality they are not. One is eating and drinking to the glory of God. The other is eating and drinking perhaps to no higher end than the satisfaction of his appetite, or, at best, the sustenance of his physical life. They are doing radically different things by virtue of the absolute antithesis.

Have you ever seen one of the mighty canyons of our Southwest? Two formations of rock rise hundreds of feet in the air alongside each other. At a distance they look like one rocky mass. Even at a closer view they seem to touch each other. Perhaps they actually do touch here and there. But when you get to the bottom of the canyon you find that there are two distinct formations of rock separated by a dark stream. Such is the case of the believer and the unbeliever. To every outward appearance they have many things in common. They really do touch at many points in life. But when it comes down to rock bottom they differ radically, they are separated by a great abyss.

One more remark must be made about the absolute antithesis. In this connection it is of extreme significance. The absolute antithesis is an *active* one.

Jesus' followers are often spoken of as an

army. Jesus is their Captain; they are his soldiers. Worldly people also constitute an army, with the Prince of the world in charge. Now it sometimes happens that two armies lie over against each other for a long time without coming to a clash. Each waits for the other to assume the offensive. Meanwhile both are idle for weeks, perhaps for months. But such is never the case with the armies of Christ and Satan. They are ever clashing. The fight goes on unceasingly. The antithesis is active.

The world hates Christ and the Christian. The Christian hates Satan and sin. And it is of the very essence of hatred to be active. Hatred is a fire. Fire may smoulder or it may flare up, but it always burns. If fire stops burning, it is fire no more. Fire just can't help burning. So it is of the nature of hatred to burn. It always burns.

And now it is evident why the Christian is bound to suffer persecution in the world. It follows with unavoidable necessity from the fact that the absolute antithesis is active.

We come to a matter of extreme seriousness for each of us personally. If every Christian has tribulation in the world, then tribulation is a test of Christianity. You and I are Christians in name. Are we Christians also in reality? If we suffer a measure of persecution in the world, we have reason to be encouraged. If the world

does not persecute us at all, we are none of Christ's.

Let no one infer that it is necessary for the Christian to walk through the world with a chip on his shoulder, inviting everybody to a "scrap." A few people seem to think this. I once heard an odd explanation of the text: "Ye are the salt of the earth." It was said that, as salt bites when it gets into an open wound, so Christians must go through the world biting. It is not easy to harmonize such a statement with the Savior's command to love all men. In *all men* even the men and women of the world are included.

Again, it is a big mistake to suppose that it is the Christian's business to seek martyrdom. In the early church there were sects with this view. Even today there are a few fanatics who have not escaped this error. Not so long ago somebody gave me to understand that he was anxious to lay his head on the block for the tenet that every man has a right to his own interpretation of the Scriptures. Strange to say, the same unhealthy sentiment is expressed in the second verse of that otherwise wonderful hymn *Faith of our Fathers*:

"Our fathers chained in prisons dark
Were still in heart and conscience free.
How blest would be their children's fate,
If they, like them, could die for thee!
Faith of our fathers, holy faith,
We will be true to thee till death!"

To be perfectly frank, I am not a bit anxious to die for the faith of my fathers. If I should have to, I hope God would grant me grace to be faithful, and I trust he would. But I would a good deal rather live for this holy faith than die for it.

However, the great majority of us need to have another side of the matter emphasized. The fact that we and the world get along so very smoothly together affords food for serious thought. I verily believe that our unfaithfulness accounts for this alarming situation.

There are two important things especially which we ought to be doing as Christians and don't do nearly as faithfully as we should. We ought to be holy as priests; and we ought to testify as prophets.

The world cannot endure holiness. If it sees a holy man, it becomes roiled. That was one reason why the world hated Jesus. Because he was perfect in holiness, the world could not bear the sight of him.

The Bible relates several instances of the same thing. Why did Cain kill Abel? Not because Abel had harmed him. Why, he had not laid a straw across his older brother's pathway. Scripture says the reason was that Abel's works were righteous. Joseph, on account of his refusal to sin, was thrown into prison. Daniel was cast into the den of lions because he prayed

three times a day before open windows toward Jerusalem.

If we lived in the full realization of being a holy priesthood, the world would find it impossible to endure us. Said an apostle: "And all they that will live godly in Christ Jesus in this world will suffer persecution."

Was your attention ever called to it that in the history of the Christian church prophets were persecuted even more frequently than priests? The world cannot "go" a holy priest, but it can still less "go" a testifying prophet. The reason is apparent. The priest may mourn the world's sins in silence, but the prophet points his finger at the world and rebukes it for its wickedness. Then it flies into a rage.

Seated on the colt of an ass, Jesus was drawing nigh to Jerusalem the last Sunday morning of his earthly life. Even now he beheld its walls and turrets. He knew that before the close of the week the holy city would cast him out and crucify him. And so he lifted up his voice and wailed. This is what he said: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the *prophets* and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but ye would not. Behold your house shall be left unto you desolate."

Let me remind you again of the eighth beatitude: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for so persecuted they the *prophets* that were before you."

The prophets, *the prophets,* must endure the brunt of persecution.

A big reason why we are being treated so well by the world today is that we are not active enough as prophets, that we do not testify sufficiently, that we do not protest against the world's wickedness as we should.

Let me cite some concrete instances.

Only a few months ago work was being done on the Lord's day on the new Fulton Street bridge in our city. By this time Sunday work has been stopped. Who put a stop to it? Who protested against this instance of Sabbath desecration? The church? No, a certain labor union. Only after a union had started the ball rolling did the church help push it along. Why don't you blush? You ought to. So should I. So should every other Christian in our city.

If all the Christian people of our good city of Grand Rapids should get together, how easy it would be to close the theaters on the Lord's Day! But somehow it isn't

done. For years it has not even been talked of seriously.

It is a matter of common knowledge that in a great many public schools of our land a religion is taught that is positively anti-christian. What are we doing about it? Yes, we establish Christian schools for our own children. Very fine! But don't we realize that as citizens we have a right to criticize our public institutions? And are we blind to it that in this instance it is our solemn duty as Christians to protest vehemently?

B

Let us turn from the Savior's terrifying announcement: "In the world ye shall have tribulation," to his cheering assurance: "But be of good cheer! I have overcome the world."

For the proper understanding of this assurance two things should be considered. We must know when Jesus spoke these words and what he meant by them.

It was Thursday night. Jesus and his disciples had eaten the Passover. The Lord had instituted the Holy Supper in remembrance of his death. Now he was ready to go from the upper chamber to the garden of Gethsemane, thence to the Jewish council chamber, thence to Gabbatha,

thence along the Sorrowful Road to Calvary. It was a matter of hours, a few hours, that separated Jesus from the cross and death. *Then* he said: "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

What a statement! Seemingly he is at the world's mercy. Presently the world will buffet him about. After just a little the world will crucify him. But now he declares: "I have overcome the world." Pray, what may he mean?

We answered that question in the preceding sermon. From the cross Jesus would look down with majestic disdain on riches, power, fame, and all that the world could offer. In that sense he had overcome the world. That is true, but thus the meaning of Jesus' words is not exhausted. He meant more.

He meant to say: "Seemingly I am now at the world's mercy, but presently I shall reign over the world. Even when I am lifted up on the cross, I shall be exalted above the world. As a reward for my labor, which is now almost completed, God is about to give unto me all power in heaven and on earth. The hour has come for the prophecy of Isaiah to be fulfilled: 'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he hath poured out his soul unto death.' And then the Scripture of the sec-

ond Psalm will likewise come to pass: I shall receive the heathen for my inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for my possession; I shall break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

Think of it! What Jesus meant was this: "Presently, when it seems that I am vanquished by the world, I shall in reality have vanquished it. Sovereignly I shall reign over it."

It is not difficult to see how this assurance of their Lord may cheer Jesus' disciples in the midst of persecution. Let us view the matter from several angles.

In the first place, it is plainly implied in our text that those who experience tribulation in the world for Christ's sake have fellowship with his suffering. On the very morrow Jesus was to be crucified. He said, as it were: "If you, my disciples, have tribulation in the world, you are my partners in suffering." In some sense every persecuted Christian bears in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus.

When Abraham Lincoln was carried mortally wounded out of the Ford Theatre in Washington, a man living across the street offered him his room and bed. The invitation was temporarily accepted. It is only a few years ago that this man died, and to the day of his death he was proud

of it that he had been permitted thus to serve the great Lincoln in his hour of need and to share in a small way in his sufferings. But oh, what a matter of just pride to share in the sufferings of Jesus Christ, the King of kings, the Lord of lords!

Have you ever been jealous of Simon of Cyrene? When Jesus broke down under the burden of his cross on the way to Golgotha, the Roman soldiers pressed into service a certain Simon who chanced to come by that way. Likely they chose him because he was a very ordinary looking man, dressed in workingman's clothes. He was compelled to bear the cross behind the Master. What an honor! But we may have a like honor. If we suffer persecution for Christ's sake, we, too, are cross-bearers after him.

Said the apostle Paul: "I fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh." That was an exceedingly bold statement. Time does not allow us now to enter upon a detailed study of it. Suffice it here to say that Paul conceived of Christ and his disciples as being one. In a sense their afflictions also are one. The Christian's tribulation in the world is Christ's. How glorious!

In the second place, the Christian may well be of good cheer in the midst of persecution because tribulation is evidence of discipleship.

I suppose every one of us once in a while doubts his Christianity. One way to settle this doubt is to put the question: do I suffer tribulation in the world for Christ's sake? If the world hates us because we are not of the world, even as Jesus was not of the world, then we may know that we are his.

Again, Jesus assures us, as it were: "I have all power on earth as well as in heaven. Consequently, the world in troubling you, my disciples, can go no farther than I allow. Without my permission not a human being can raise a finger against you. And do I not love you with perfect love? Then just leave it to me to take care of you in the hour of trial." Who, on hearing these words of his Lord, does not feel the peace of God descending on his heart?

Let us view the same thought from a slightly different angle. To put it very popularly, Jesus says in substance: "I have gone through the mill; I came through in safety; and I will see to it that you come safely through also."

Have you ever had a serious operation? The anesthetic was being administered and you were "going under," as people say. It is possible that there was at your side a very dear friend who had passed successfully through the same operation. While you were "going under" he held your hand. The very "feel" of that hand strengthened and

cheered you most wonderfully. It seemed as if he were whispering to you: "Don't worry; I have gone through the same thing; I came through all right; and here I am." Jesus says much the same thing to us in our text.

But no, this illustration does not fill the bill. Let us say that you are climbing the Swiss Alps with a guide. You come to a very dangerous place. A steep ascent of several yards must be made. If you lose your footing, you will plunge into a deep ravine. In agile fashion the guide makes the ascent. Now he throws one end of a rope to you, bids you fasten it about you, and says: "Don't be afraid; I got here safely, and I shall see to it that you get here too. Even if you should slip, you will not fall, for I shall hang on to my end of the rope." Jesus has gained the height. We are toiling upward amid great peril. But he guarantees our safe arrival. "Be of good cheer," he says; "I have overcome the world."

There is a fourth reason why the Christian can suffer cheerfully. His tribulation in the world serves as a preparation for the eternal bliss of heaven. Persecution makes him meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light.

The English word *tribulation* is derived from the Latin *tribulum,* an instrument

used to separate the chaff from the wheat by rubbing. In two ways tribulation may be said to separate the chaff from the wheat. It shows up the faithful and the hypocrites in the church. But it also tends to purge out sin from the heart and the life of the individual Christian. By suffering he is sanctified and thus prepared to take his place in the ranks of the saints in glory.

Finally, the greatness of the Christian's glory in heaven will be determined in part by the measure of his suffering for Christ's sake in the world.

There will be different degrees of glory in the life to come. Some will shine like the stars, and one star differs in glory from another. Others will shine like the moon. Still others will shine like the sun. And the fiercer the tribulation now, the greater the glory hereafter. To quote the last beatitude once more: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for *great* is your reward in heaven, for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you."

Richard Baxter, that grand old saint, suffered much persecution in this world. Somebody once said to him: "Mr. Baxter, you ought to have a wonderful crown in heaven; you have had so much tribulation." Would you know what was his reply? "I desire no other reward than this: more

persecution." We waive the question whether this sentiment was thoroughly healthy. So much is certain, Baxter had learned to take tribulation cheerfully. We may assume that his glory will be great in that day.

Think of it! When the Christian has tribulation in the world, he shares in the suffering of his Lord, he is assured of discipleship, he is certain of being carried through safely, he is being prepared for the bliss of heaven, he is promised a great reward in glory. All that Jesus must have had in mind when he said: "Be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." Who would not be cheerful?

Does anybody now doubt whether one can be cheerful in persecution? Does *happy martyr* still seem a contradiction in terms? Then observe the actual experience of Jesus' followers.

Peter and John were beaten because they preached in the name of Christ. No doubt, they received the forty stripes minus one which Jewish law prescribed. But they stepped forth from the council room glad that they were accounted worthy to suffer persecution for the Master's sake. At Philippi Paul and Silas were scourged, thrown into prison, their feet fastened in stocks, and yet in the middle of the night they sang

praises to God. Said the apostle Paul: "We glory in tribulation." History tells us of martyrs who, while being burned at the stake, sang paeans of victory sounding out above the crackling of the fire. And what a wonderful hymn is Luther's *A Mighty Fortress Is Our God!* It was inspired by persecution. Listen to the last stanza:

"Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill;
God's truth abideth still,
His Kingdom is forever."

That's being of good cheer in the midst of tribulation!

Oh, what comfort in this cheering assurance of our blessed Lord! It is like a beautiful rainbow that hangs calm and serene over the cataract, and shines radiantly down upon the hell of waters tortured below.

We cannot help shouting exultingly:

"Ten thousand times ten thousand
In sparkling raiment bright,
The armies of the ransomed saints,
Throng up the steeps of light.
'Tis finished, all is finished,
Their fight with death and sin.
Fling open wide the golden gates
And let the victors in.

What rush at alleluiahs
Fills all the earth and sky!
What ringing of a thousand harps
Bespeaks the triumph nigh!
O day for which creation
And all its tribes were made!
O joy, for all its former woes
A thousandfold repaid!"

With Paul we glory triumphantly:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? As it is written, 'For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

We catch a glimpse of the divine's glorious vision:

"After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands. These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light upon them nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

TRAVELING THROUGH THE WORLD

A Yearning Pilgrim

VI

TRAVELING THROUGH THE WORLD

A Yearning Pilgrim

> "And confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."—Hebrews 11:13

THE reference of our text is to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Of them we are told that they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The question arises when it was and on what occasion that they made this confession. I think the author of Hebrews had in mind especially two instances.

Abraham had lost his wife Sarah through death but had no place to lay her remains to rest. He did not own so much as a burial plot in the land of Canaan. Now he approached the sons of Heth for the purchase of the cave of Machpelah. His first words were these: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you."

Jacob with his whole family had come to Egypt. One day Joseph introduced his aged father to Pharaoh. The king asked the question which is often asked of old

folk and which they like to have put to them: "How old are you?" Jacob's reply was very significant. Said he: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years." Observe that he did not speak of the days of the years of his *life,* but of the days of the years of his *pilgrimage.*

On these two occasions at least the patriarchs confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Mention is made of strangers *and* pilgrims. The terms are not altogether synonymous. While every pilgrim is a stranger, not every stranger is necessarily a pilgrim. We may say that every horse is a quadruped, but it does not follow that every quadruped is a horse. There are quadrupeds which are not horses. In the same way pilgrims are strangers, but strangers are not in all cases pilgrims. A few illustrations will make the difference plain.

You have read, no doubt, of the Huguenots. The French Protestants of the Reformation age were so called. They were bitterly persecuted; some of them were driven across the border, and a few came to the Netherlands. These were strangers in a foreign land. But it can hardly be said that they were pilgrims. A great many of them made their homes in Holland and

settled there for good. They were strangers, not pilgrims.

You have also read of the Pilgrim Fathers, who came across the Atlantic in the *Mayflower* and settled in Massachusetts in 1620. They came to America from England, but not directly. First they spent a while in Holland. Now during their stay in Holland they were not only strangers, as were the Huguenots; they were also pilgrims. For they never really settled down in the Netherlands. Soon after their arrival there they felt that they did not care to stay and decided to move on to another country.

So a stranger is simply a foreigner, but a pilgrim is one who has his eye on some other land.

We are told of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that they were both strangers and pilgrims. They were strangers in earthly Canaan. They were pilgrims because they had their hearts set on heavenly Canaan.

The words of our text may be applied to every Christian. Every Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim: a stranger here, and a pilgrim on his way to heaven.

It is evident, then, that our text stresses two things:

A. *The Christian's relation to earth.*

B. *The Christian's relation to heaven.*

A

Let no one suppose that the Christian, because he is a stranger on earth, is not interested in the things of earth. He is much interested.

Abraham was abundantly prospered in Canaan in a material way, and he was thankful for it. Much the same thing may be said of Jacob. It is interesting to note two different estimates that Jacob made of his life. When he stood before Pharaoh he said: "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." But when he blessed the two sons of Joseph he spoke of "the God which fed me all my life long unto this day" and "the angel which redeemed me from all evil." He had an eye for the bright side of life as well as the dark. To some extent at least he had enjoyed life on earth.

You may have seen wall paper which was a combination of black and gold. As you looked at it from a certain angle, it seemed quite black. But from another viewpoint the gold predominated, and it was very bright. Such was the life of Jacob, and such is the life of everybody. The Christian sees the gold as well as the black. And for the gold he thanks God.

We are told that the children of Israel, on their journey through the Arabian desert, came to a place called Elim. It was

an oasis with twelve fountains of water and seventy palm trees. Did they say to each other: "Let us not stop here. What do we care about shade and water? Let us move on as quickly as possible to the better land, the land flowing with milk and honey, the land of vines and fig trees, the land of rest"? Not at all. They were only too glad to bide a while at the oasis of Elim. And that was perfectly proper. God was willing to have it so. And so the pillar of fire and cloud remained there for some time. Thus the Christian is interested in the good things which God bestows upon him in the desert of life, and he takes time to enjoy them.

There comes to my mind the 54th verse of Psalm 119. It contains a beautiful expression. The author speaks of "my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." Mind you, he is a pilgrim; but even while on his pilgrimage he often sings. There is every reason why we should do likewise. It won't do for us to sigh incessantly for the better land. As we journey along we should every once in a while burst into song.

Let us say that you are planning a trip to southern California, the land of bright sunshine and beautiful scenery. You are very anxious to get there. Does it follow that you are not interested in what may happen to you on the way? It certainly does not.

Let us assume that you decide to drive through. I am sure that you would rather make the trip in a roomy, comfortable car than in a model-T Ford. Or say that you are going to make the journey by train. Would you not give thought to the matter of a smooth roadbed and good dining service? So you might well decide on the Sante Fe. Or perhaps you care more about scenery along the way than anything else. Then you will likely give preference to some other railroad. The point is this: while you are very anxious to reach California, you are interested in several things on the way. So the Christian's chief interest lies in heaven, but he is by no means indifferent to the things of earth.

The Christian is not a man that sees "a blight in every flower, a canker in every fruit, and a baldness on the head of every prophet." He appreciates the good things of earth. Once in a while he may even feel like saying what a certain Christian once said: "I am told that there is a better world than this, but at times I find it hard to believe."

We now come to a turn of thought. While the Christian is interested in the good things of earth, he is not attached to them.

The life of the patriarch Abraham illustrates this truth beautifully.

When Abraham came to Canaan, there were several cities in the land. But he never lived in one of them. He always dwelt in a tent. That is significant. A city is rather permanent, while a tent can be moved easily from place to place. By making a tent his home, Abraham showed that he was not attached to earth.

By the way, his nephew Lot moved into a city, Sodom. That was his big mistake. He went there in hopes of getting rich quickly. It was his desire for a treasure on earth that drew him Sodomward. His soul cleaved to the dust. But it cost him practically all he had. It is incomparably better to live with Abraham and God in a tent than to live with Lot and wealth in a city where subterranean brimstone and unquenchable fire are ready to burst forth.

We are told a most interesting thing about Abraham. In the New Testament it is said that he never owned any land in Canaan, no, "not so much as to set foot on." He did not own a square foot of land, we would say today. Yet in Genesis we are informed that he bought of the sons of Heth a burial plot, the cave of Machpelah. Apparently there is a contradiction here. Abraham owned no land at all, yet he did own a burial plot. In reality these two statements are in perfect harmony with each other. Let us say that you own no

real estate except a cemetery lot. Are you now a landowner? Hardly. You are not counted as such, for you pay no taxes on your lot. And one day you will be buried in it, and then you won't own the lot, but it will own you.

A wealthy Englishman was inhabiting a beautiful mansion on a large estate. He decided for Christ's sake to dispose of practically all his riches, giving them away to the poor. So he did. Now he moved into a little bit of a cottage. One day a friend came to call on him. On arriving the visitor threw up his hands in surprise and exclaimed: "Do you mean to say that you live in this mean cottage?" The reply came: "No, I live up there," as he pointed upward; "I just *lodge* here." The Christian doesn't live here, he just lodges here. His home is beyond the clouds.

Has your attention ever been called to it that of all creatures on earth man feels least at home? It may be that Jesus had that in mind when he said: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay down his head." Primarily he was referring to himself, but he may also have been thinking of humanity, and possibly for that reason he called himself *the Son of Man.* Be that as it may, fact is that the animals feel much more at home on earth than do

we men. The reason is apparent. In distinction from them we have eternity in our hearts, and therefore we cannot be satisfied with temporal things. In the words of Augustine: "We were created unto God, and we cannot rest except in God."

A certain Christian once said: "I saw a dog, and I wished that I were a dog." Do you wonder what he was driving at? What he meant was this: a dog is satisfied with life on earth even though he leads but a dog's life, but we human beings cannot find rest for our souls in this world. We long for satisfaction; the dog has it. And is it not true that of all human beings the Christian is most conscious of his dissatisfaction? While others try to crush the yearning for the eternal within them, he seeks to do it justice. And so the Christian is ever roaming and never rooted, and he is exceedingly hungry at the feast.

There are many foreigners in our land, and we all know how easy it is to tell them from native Americans. The foreigner is betrayed by his speech, his dress, his demeanor, his mode of life. Usually one can spot him immediately.

Well do I remember when, some thirty-eight years ago, my father and mother with their eight children came to these United States from the Netherlands, and went to live in Grand Haven, Michigan. How well

the other boys knew that we were foreigners! They had but one name for us. Invariably they called us *Dutchies.* That name still rings in my ears whenever I go to Grand Haven. The Canaanites had a similar nickname for Abraham. They called him *Hebrew,* "the man from across the river," which in this case was the Euphrates. He was a foreigner to them. So the Christian differs from the men and women of the world, and they know it.

It is said that the waters of the Rhone are divided into two currents at Geneva. On the one hand is a clean, clear stream, and alongside of it flows a very dirty one. Two currents of water flow in one bed, but each retains its identity. Such is the relation of the Christian and the worldling to each other.

Let me express the Christian's relation to earth in another way. He views the things of earth in the light of the things of heaven.

That the patriarchs did. They thought much of earthly Canaan, but they did not forget that it was but a type of the heavenly land. The blessings of Palestine suggested to them the riches of the better country; that is, the heavenly.

There are two terms which express rather exactly the relation of earthly things

to those of heaven. They are the words *auxiliary* and *subsidiary*.

The things of earth are auxiliary to the things of heaven. They are a help. This truth deserves emphasis. Some Christians seem to think that material things are detrimental to spiritual life, that, if only we could forget about earthly affairs, we would get on much better as we journey heavenward. That is not the truth. The things of earth were meant to be auxiliary to the things of heaven. Some beautiful scene, for instance, may well suggest to us the river of the water of life which flows in the midst of the glorious city of God, and the tree of life adorning its banks. And what Christian, when viewing the beautiful works of man in a museum of fine arts, has never longed for the day when "they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into the New Jerusalem"?

The things of earth, while auxiliary to those of heaven, are also decidedly subsidiary to them. The two are not in the same class. They are not on a par with each other. The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal; and what does the temporal amount to in comparison with the eternal? Earth is a means; heaven is the end. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

Let me bring these two words together in one simple illustration. Somebody is building a house. While doing so, of course he erects scaffolding. The scaffolding is a great help, so great that it is well nigh, perhaps altogether, impossible to build the house without it. But it is decidedly subsidiary. It is simply a means to an end. It is not a part of the house at all. And once the house is completed, the scaffolding will be torn down. The things of earth are scaffolding that ought to lead us to heaven. But they are scaffolding and no more. Auxiliary they are, but subsidiary.

Let no one suppose for a moment that the Christian, because he is a stranger and pilgrim on earth, neglects his daily tasks. The exact opposite is the case. Just because he is a pilgrim and stranger he attends to the menial duties of life very well, better even than the worldly man. The Christian views them in the light of eternity. This means, among other things, that he realizes that at the break of eternity he will have to give an account of all he did and all he left undone in time. His reward will be commensurate with his faithfulness in the performance of the little duties of this life. He has an incentive which the man of the world has not for laboring hard at his earthly tasks.

Did you ever hear of the Christian who

was playing a game of chess when a fellow Christian interrupted him and rebuked him for what he styled a sinful waste of valuable time? Said he to his critic: "I am playing to the glory of God." The critic failed to understand and put the question: "Suppose that Jesus should come on the clouds this minute, what would you do?" The answer came: "I would finish the game." I am not saying that I would do that. I rather think that I would drop the game suddenly. But I will say that the chessplayer's critic took an unhealthy view of life.

It is said that one day, many years ago, when the House of Representatives was in session, it suddenly became exceedingly dark. Daylight vanished altogether. Several members became quite apprehensive. Not a few thought that the day of judgment had arrived. All discussion ceased. But the president of the assembly merely said: "Bring on candles, and let us continue our work."

Don't think that, when Jesus comes back on the clouds, he will have to find you at the Lord's Supper in church. It is a good place. There is no better on earth. But he might as well find you at your daily work in the factory, the office, the store, or the home. It would be no disgrace if he found you playing a good game.

Let us attend diligently to our earthly affairs for God's sake. In the light of eternity let us do with all our might whatever our hand finds to do.

Again, because the Christian is a pilgrim and stranger on earth he will not mind it exceedingly to leave the things of earth behind.

That is self-evident. A pilgrim is a person who voluntarily leaves the land in which he has been living and goes to another. Circumstances may compel him somewhat against his will, but ultimately he makes up his mind to go. He is not forced to go but goes willingly. Then, surely, it need not cause him unbearable heartache to leave the old country behind. If we are pilgrims going on to heaven, the thought of departing from earth should not grieve us so very much.

Jacob was lying on his deathbed. Did he dread to die? Not at all. Said he: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord."

Paul was in his Roman dungeon. Death stared him in the face. He wrote to his dear friends at Philippi: "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

It is said that Archbishop Leighton, who died in the year 1684, breathed his last in an inn near London. Strange to say, the desire of his heart was thus granted, for he

had often expressed the wish that he might die in an inn "because it looked so like a pilgrim going home."

You have read, no doubt, the beautiful requiem which Robert Louis Stevenson prepared for his own tombstone. Altogether apart from the question of Stevenson's Christianity, it may be said to express a sentiment found at times in the Christian's soul.

"Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die.
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse ye grave for me:
'Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.'"

But rather would we sing softly the simple hymn:

"Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing,
But oh the joy when I shall wake
Within the palace of the King!

Some day when fades the golden sun
Beneath the rosy tinted west,
My blessed Lord shall say, 'Well done,'
And I shall enter into rest."

"It matters not how quick the pace." We are pilgrims homeward bound.

B

We have already touched on the Christian's relation to heaven. Now we want to enlarge on it a little more.

It is plainly referred to in our text. We are told of the patriarchs that they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Immediately the author of Hebrews adds that they who say such things declare plainly that they seek a better country, a heavenly. Now the Greek word which is translated *seek* is very expressive. It signifies *to seek with yearning.* The patriarchs sought heaven with yearning hearts. So do Christians.

We of the new dispensation have much more reason to look forward with longing to heaven than had the Old Testament saints. God saw fit to reveal very little to them of the life to come. They expected to receive the reward of godliness especially in this life. Only occasionally did they catch a glimpse of the beyond. But we know a great deal more about it, thanks to the fuller revelation on the pages of the New Testament. So we surely should seek longingly, yearningly, the country beyond the skies.

However, let us not grow impatient.

Once in a long while one meets a Christian who is actually impatient about getting to heaven. I can recall two such cases that

came to my attention during the seventeen years of my ministry. Will you pardon a brief reference to one of them?

An elderly woman one day had a stroke of apoplexy. I called on her, tried to encourage her, expressed the wish that she might soon be well, and prayed for her recovery. She did not seem pleased. When I called again a few days later her condition had noticeably improved. And now she almost rebelled against the providence of God. She wanted to go to heaven at once and chafed under the delay.

We should be glad to stay here as long as God wants us to. To want to live is natural. Let us not be unnatural about our Christianity.

Besides, does it not seem rather foolish to become impatient about this thing? Why, we are just flying on to death and eternity. Why should we want to go faster? Maybe you don't realize how fast you are going. Actually you are going at a terrific rate. One never knows how fast one travels in an automobile until presently one has a collision; then one knows. So we shall never realize how fast we are traveling through the world until we collide with death. Then we shall know. In the meantime let us beware lest we exceed God's speed-limit. That wouldn't be right.

What does it mean to long for heaven?

Let me answer this question in a suggestive way.

It is said that Swiss mountaineers who for a while leave the mountains and dwell in the plains become homesick for the mountains. They cannot stand it any longer in the lowlands; they must get back among the clouds.

There is a little story which I like to tell at funerals. May I tell it now? There was a family: father, mother, and son, living on the banks of a certain river all by themselves in a very lonely spot. No other house was anywhere near theirs. But beyond the river was a small city. Husband and wife were hardly at all interested in the city folk. Precious little attention they gave them. They just went about their work in their own solitary way. However, the son, being young, rather enjoyed going to town once in a while. After some time he met a young lady there with whom he fell in love. The two were married and started housekeeping in the city. Ah, how the attitude of the parents now changed! Never would they go to bed without first gazing across the river to see whether the windows of their son's home were still lit up; and their first thought on rising in the morning was to glance across the river, wondering whether smoke were already curling up from the chimney of their be-

loved's cottage. After a while they began to long to live in the city themselves and so strong did this longing become that they actually moved across the river. Their son and daughter lived there. That made all the difference.

Do you sometimes long to move across the river into the City? Do you ever feel like singing:

> "Oh land of day across the way!
> Oh light on the beautiful shore!
> Its beams of gold would I behold,
> And bask in its rays for evermore.
> Oh land of light, serene and bright
> Where falleth no shadow of night"?

Just what in heaven should we long for? What is it upon which our yearning should center?

Should we long for heaven because there we shall have no more troubles and trials and tribulations? That is perfectly proper, a few overly spiritual individuals to the contrary notwithstanding. It is natural.

Should we long for heaven because there we shall be reunited with our dear ones who have already fallen asleep in Jesus, because with the break of morning we shall see "those angel faces smile which we have loved long since and lost awhile"? That also is perfectly proper. It is human in the best sense of the word.

Should we long for heaven because there

we shall be free from sin? Yes, emphatically so. That is one of the very greatest things about heaven. To yearn for it is highly spiritual.

However, in this connection the emphasis falls elsewhere. The Christian is spoken of as a pilgrim. It is evident that he longs for heaven because there he will be at home. That is the point now. Heaven is our home. In all of God's universe there is no other place like it.

What is home? Alas, in our day one hardly knows. The most modern definition of a home is: "the place where you leave word where you may be found after you have left." But that is sheer mockery. A home is not just a house, a place where you eat and sleep, a club where occasionally you meet the other members of the family.

I shall say in four sentences what a home is.

Home is where the heart is. "A commonplace," you say. Yes, but one that can bear repetition. I don't care what a beautiful mansion you may have to live in and how richly it may be furnished; if there is no heart there, if there is no love there, you are homeless. Home is the place you love.

Home is the place where one can rest. At home you can take it easy, you don't have to observe all kinds of rules and regu-

lations. You can be yourself; just natural, you know.

Home is the place where one really lives. Now I use the term *lives* in a rich sense, a pregnant sense, so to speak. I am reminded of the slogans of Grand Rapids and Holland, neighboring cities in our state. The latter has a better slogan than the former. "Grand Rapids is a good place to live," but " Holland is the place where people really live." Home is the place where people really live, where they get most out of life, where life is truly enjoyed.

And home is the place where one is satisfied to be. If your house is a home to you, just being there gives you such a sense of solid satisfaction that you find it hard to break away.

Would you know what all this means for the Christian? It means that his home is where God is. The Christian's home is with God. Let me prove it.

Home is where the heart is. Says the Christian: "My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God."

Home is the place where one can rest. Declared the great Augustine: "Man was made unto God, and he cannot rest except in God."

Home is the place where one really lives. Sang the psalmist: "Thou wilt show me the path of life; in thy presence is fulness of

joy; on thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

Home is where one is satisfied to be. Breathed the Hebrew poet: "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

Now don't you see how true it is that the Christian's home is where God is?

We may go a step farther. The Christian's home is not merely where God is, but the Christian's home is *God himself.* We sing of that, do we not, in the rich ninetieth Psalm:

> "O God, our help in ages past,
> Our hope for years to come,
> Our shelter from the stormy blast,
> And our eternal home."

O God, our eternal home! God is the Christian's home. The Christian longs for heaven because he longs for God.

Now, do you ever long for heaven? Never? Never at all? Are you so much engrossed with the things of time and earth that you never yearn for heaven? There is something wrong with you. Here is a child away from home and it does not care to go home. It has not a child's heart. We are away from home. It is beyond the skies. Our Father dwells there. So does our Elder Brother. Many of our little brothers and sisters are there too. Do

you never long for that place? If not, how can you call yourself God's child?

If you really long for it at least once in a while, then you are surely going there. No, your longing can never be the ground of your salvation. Christ's merits are that. But do you suppose that God would create a mouth and not fill it? Would he give an appetite and not appease it? Would he put into your heart a yearning for heaven and not satisfy it? It is unthinkable. Just as surely as you long for heaven, so surely are you going there.

Does heaven seem far away and unreal? Do you dream of it as a *Beautiful Isle of Somewhere?* Do you think of it as a sort of mirage? Travelers in deserts sometimes see before them a beautiful lake with sparkling waters, and on its shore lovely trees affording cool refreshing shade. They hasten on to quench their thirst and rest their weary limbs. Alas, they find nothing but barren sands. What they saw was a mirage. Or perhaps they think to see a beautiful city towering to the skies. They stand enraptured. They hurry on to enter the city. Presently the vision fades away.

Listen! Even a mirage is not altogether unreal. It is a reflection on the desert air of something that exists somewhere, a real city, a real lake, a real oasis.

Listen again! Heaven is not a mirage,

but a real city. It is not a camp of tents, but a city. It is not a western frontier town, but a city that has foundations. It is a city not reared by human hands; its builder and maker is God. It is incomparably more real than any city on earth. It is the eternal city of God.

"One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o'er and o'er,
That I am nearer home today
Than I've ever been before:
Nearer my Father's house,
Where the many mansions be;
Nearer the great white throne,
Nearer the crystal sea,
Nearer the bound of life,
Where we lay our burdens down;
Nearer losing the cross,
Nearer gaining the crown."

"Nearer, my God, to thee."

OWNING THE WORLD

A Multi-Millionaire

VII

OWNING THE WORLD

A Multi-Millionaire

"The world is yours . . . and ye are Christ's."
—1 Corinthians 3:22, 23

IT is well, I take it, to study the words of our text in the light of the context.

The apostle Paul was writing to the church at Corinth. There were parties, factions, at least three of them, in this church. Some said: "We are of Paul"; others declared: "We are of Cephas"; and still others claimed to be of Apollos. Now Paul was administering a severe rebuke to these factions. Said he in effect: "You are all mistaken. Some of you, for instance, say: 'We are of Paul.' But that is not the truth. You are not of Paul, but Paul is of you; you do not belong to Paul, but Paul belongs to you. The church is not there for the minister, but the minister is there for the church. It follows that not only Paul is yours, but also the other apostles and teachers. Paul is yours, so is Apollos, and so is Cephas."

The apostle might have stopped here. He

had administered a rather stinging rebuke to the parties in the Corinthian church. But with his usual impetuosity he went on into regions far beyond. He assured the believers at Corinth that not only Paul and Apollos and Cephas were theirs, but *all things*. "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come: all are yours." In this sentence there is presented to us a complete inventory of the Christian's wealth.

For our present purpose we single out one item of this inventory: "The world is yours"; and we join to it the first clause of the next verse: "And ye are Christ's."

The term *world* must here be taken in its most comprehensive sense. It can hardly be interpreted too comprehensively. It designates *the whole world, the universe, the sum total of things created.* All things belong to the Christian.

We find in our text two paradoxes. Perhaps it is not altogether superfluous to say what a paradox is. We mean by it an assertion which seemingly contradicts itself but in reality does not.

Here is an example. It may be said that the little Napoleon was a great man. On the face of it that statement seems self-contradictory. How can a man at once be little and great? But on second thought

this question is easily answered. Napoleon Bonaparte was of small stature, but in several other respects, as general, for instance, he was undeniably great. So here is a simple paradox.

Now in our text there are two beautiful paradoxes. Let me attempt to state them.

Paul was writing to the church at Corinth. Corinth was a great seaport, a commercial city of considerable wealth. But it so happened that the believers at this place were not wealthy on the whole. Elsewhere we are told that they were not many rich. If someone had gone to the office of one of the great bankers of Corinth in that day to make inquiries as to the financial standing of the members of the church, likely the banker would have said: "Financial standing? Why, my dear sir, they haven't any. There is hardly one among them that is worth fifty ounces of silver. You might buy up the whole lot of them for five talents of gold. The only man among them who has anything is that Jew Agrippa, and he was almost ruined when the Emperor Claudius expelled all the Jews from Rome." But now hear Paul's estimate of these same people. Says he: "They are owners of the world; all things belong to them."

Here is a paradox for you: not many rich, but owners of the universe.

Let no one say that it is impossible to be rich and a Christian. That would not be true. Abraham, the friend of God, was rich. Both Jesus and Paul had rich friends. We all know wealthy people whom we regard as splendid Christians. Yet it is true of the church of Christ in every age that its members on the whole are not many rich. "God has chosen the poor of this world," says James. Yet they, according to our text, own the universe.

So this is our first paradox: the poor Christian, owner of the world.

There is a second paradox in our text. Says the apostle: "All things are yours, but ye are Christ's." The implication is: "It is true that you own the world, and yet you don't even own yourselves." It follows that the Christian owns nothing. There is nothing nearer to one than oneself. If one doesn't own oneself, one manifestly owns nothing. That is the meaning of "And ye are Christ's."

So our second paradox is: the owner of the world, owner of nothing.

Let me enlarge on these two paradoxes:

A. *The poor Christian, owner of the world.*

B. *The owner of the world, owner of nothing.*

As this sermon is one of several on the Christian's relation to the world, the greater part of our time will be devoted to the former paradox.

A

The first proposition which I wish to develop a little is that *the Christian is in a better position than anybody else to enjoy the world.*

Of course, it doesn't look that way. The majority of Christians are not wealthy, and it would seem to require money to enjoy the world. It takes money to travel and so to enjoy the glories of nature as well as the works of man. It takes money to get an education. It takes money to buy works of art. No sane person will care to deny this. Nevertheless, in a very real sense, in a deep sense, the Christian, poor though he be, is in a better position to enjoy the world than is the richest man of the world.

To prove this contention let me make a statement which may at first blush surprise a few of you and yet is obviously true. You own only that which you appreciate, or, more precisely, that which you love. Do you doubt it? But it is easily shown.

Will you pardon an exceedingly simple, almost homely, illustration? Here is a well-to-do family. It is fond of grapefruit and

has it for breakfast every day. At first this dish was considered a real treat, but now it is no longer appreciated. The children even grow a bit tired of it and suggest a change. Next door live very poor folk. They cannot afford grapefruit every day, not even every Sunday. They have it only once in a great while. But, I assure you, then they do *have* it. Why, the children's mouths water already when they see mother cut the luscious citrus in two. And at the table not a drop of the precious juice is wasted. That's *having* grapefruit.

A wealthy man owns a splendid set of the works of Shakespeare. It comprises several volumes. The paper is the best to be had. The binding is simply gorgeous. And there are several steel-cut engravings. Next door lives a man too poor to own even a one-volume edition of the great English dramatist. He has to go to the public library to read Shakespeare. But this he does. And what enjoyment he gets out of it! He just revels! His neighbor, however, finds Shakespeare so unintelligible and uninteresting that he never opens a volume. Which of the two *owns* Shakespeare?

Two men are walking on a beautiful estate. It happens to be spring. The trees are just showing a tinge of green. The shrubs are beginning to bud out. Here and there daffodils lift up their graceful

heads above the fresh grass. Yonder is a bed of gorgeous tulips. One of the men is the owner of the estate, the other a poor laborer. But it so happens that the latter loves nature, while the former is quite indifferent to it. Whose is the estate?

In one of his essays Hazlitt relates that he used to travel afoot from the house of one rich man to that of another that he might study their works of art. He was so poor that he could not afford a carriage. How he envied the wealthy! But one day it dawned on him that he owned the works of art in a fuller sense than the men who had them in their homes. He could appreciate them far better than their supposed owners. They paid the price for them, but he got the enjoyment out of them. He was rich.

It is possible that you live in the same house with persons whom you do not love. You may call them brother, sister, husband, wife, or anything of the kind, but in reality they are not that to you. Only those whom you love are yours.

Now the Christian loves the universe. He does so because it is the work of his Father. The best known verse of the gospel tells us that "God so loved the *world* that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Some expositors

interpret the term *world* here in the sense of *universe.* God is said to love the universe as the work of his hands. Whether or not this is a correct exegesis of John 3:16, the fact cannot be denied. And God's child loves the universe because it is the Father's creation. Because he loves God, he appreciates his work. The child of the world cannot do that. Therefore the Christian may be said to own the world in a fuller sense than anybody else under the sun.

It follows that the life of the ascetic is not the ideal Christian life. It is quite commonly thought that the ascetic is at least a little better than anybody else. But this is a serious error. Not John the Baptist, who came neither eating nor drinking, was the ideal man, but Jesus, who did both. We are told of the churchfather Jerome that he was very much afraid that his soul might ultimately be lost because he could not conquer his admiration for Cicero's Latin prose. Even the greatest of all the churchfathers, St. Augustine, is said to have shrunk within himself when he thought of his love for the poems of Vergil. He held, too, that marriage was sinful in itself. To bring the matter down to date, I have only to remind you of the extreme view of some prohibitionists, that it is a sin *per se* to drink a glass of wine, and of

the perfectly foolish notion of certain well-meaning but erring people, that it is impossible to study the natural sciences and remain a good Christian. All that is asceticism. It is not genuine Christianity.

Don't misunderstand! I do not say that those who hold such views are not Christians. God forbid that I should make such a statement! But their outlook on life is not healthy. It is far from ideal. The Christian owns the world and is of all men in the best position to enjoy it.

Would you know what the highest type of Christian does? This may seem bold doctrine but it is sound to the core. He drinks the cup of gladness without becoming intoxicated. He looks upon the world's grandeur without being dazzled. He tastes the sweetness of the world but defies its thrall. He uses the world but is careful not to use it to the full. That is Christianity.

Let me express the same truth in another way. This is ideal Christianity: to enjoy "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report."

Once more, the Christian is in a better position to enjoy the world than is anybody else. He is its owner.

Here is another proposition which I should like to develop: *everything in the world is subservient to the Christian's highest good.*

It is commonly thought, is it not, that rich people have more servants than have the poor. Superficially viewed, that is true. Most of us are so poor that we cannot well afford any servants. By the way, judging by the complaints which the rich are wont to make about their help, you may congratulate yourself on being so poor. But let me tell you that the poorest Christian has more servants than the richest millionaire on earth. Servants? Why, all things are the Christians servants. Everything stands ready to serve him.

Just a few things may be mentioned.

All the material things of the universe are subservient to the Christian's highest good, his spiritual welfare.

There is a special lesson in each parable told by Jesus. There is also a general lesson in all of them taken together. Would you know what is the one big lesson conveyed by all the parables of our Lord? Simply this: that things material exist, at least in part, I dare say primarily, for spiritual edification. The little ones are taught in catechism that a parable is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." In every parable, by things of earth

our souls are lifted heavenward. Did not Jesus say that the kingdom of heaven is like a pearl, like a seed, like leaven? There isn't a single flower, there isn't a distant star, there isn't a murmuring brooklet, there isn't a singing bird, there isn't a butterfly or a bee, but was intended by God to benefit his people spiritually, to draw them Godward. All that the Christian sees round about him in God's universe suggests to him the opening words of so many parables of his Lord: "The kingdom of heaven is like."

Let us stop here for a moment of introspection.

What is our attitude toward the material world? Does it point us heavenward, draw us Godward? If so, well and good; we own the world. But if not, then the world owns us. Here is a test, perhaps a bit unusual, of Christianity.

The ancient Scythians, most barbarous of barbarians, are said to have had a very strange burial custom. When a wealthy man had died, they would dress him in his best clothes, put him in his best carriage, cart him around to the houses of his friends, put him at the head of the table, and address him with all kinds of flattery. How would you like the idea of having that done to you when you die? But likely much the same thing is being done to some

of us now. What is your attitude toward things material? Do you love them for their own sake? Are they an end in themselves to you? Then you are a dead one. And as your wealth increases and your social standing rises and men vie with each other in honoring you, you are like yon dead Scythian.

I am reminded of another funeral. When Charlemagne, the Christian ruler of the Holy Roman Empire, died, his body was put to rest most magnificently. His servants dressed him in his imperial robe, set him on his marble throne, decked him with his most resplendent crown. But they also put an open Testament in his hands, and made a finger point to these words of the Lord Jesus: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?"

Once more, what do material things mean to you? Do they suggest spiritual realities and so benefit you spiritually? Or are they an end in themselves to you? If the latter should be the case, you are losing your soul. If the other attitude is yours, the world is your servant.

The sad experiences of life are also the Christian's servants.

Often the child of God has more trials than the child of the world. From time immemorial God's people have grappled

with the problem why this should be so. It confronted the author of Psalm seventy-three and the writer of the Book of Job. There are several angles to the solution of the problem of the Christian's suffering. I shall suggest but one. All the trials of life are sent by God for the Christian's spiritual good, for his sanctification. By means of them the heavenly Father makes his children "meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light," where there will be no more sorrow because there will be no more sin.

May I tell on old story? Preachers liked to tell it when I was a boy. A man had a very heavy cross to bear. Often it seemed to him entirely too heavy. He prayed and prayed that God would relieve him of it. One night he dreamt that his wish had been granted. Now he went on his way rejoicing. After a while he found himself standing on the bank of the river of death. Beyond lay the golden city of God, the city of everlasting joy. How eager he was to cross! But he was puzzled as to how this might be done. There was no bridge, and no boat was in sight nor any kind of ferry. He began to be worried. Meanwhile other travelers arrived at the river. Straightway each of them lifted a cross from his shoulder, cast it into the water, sat on it, and so floated across to the glorious city. But our friend had no cross to

serve him in that way. He awoke with big drops of cold sweat on his brow. But he had learned the valuable lesson that the Christian's burdens help him to get to heaven, that only he who bears a cross here will wear a crown there, that crosses are servants.

Even death, that mighty monarch who seems to rule over all men without distinction, the child of God as well as the worldling, the king of terrors, is the Christian's servant. At the very moment when he seems to bow before death, death bows before him. It translates him from this vale of tears to the perfect bliss of heaven.

An artist once made two engravings of death. One is entitled, *Death the Destroyer,* the other, *Death the Friend.* In the first he steps into the midst of a very gay company engaged in dancing, drinking, and carousing generally. When he flings open the door, everybody flees in terror. The other represents him as coming into a church belfry where a lone saint is seated with an open Bible before him. The saint smiles, and the peace of God that passes understanding is spread over his features.

To every dying Christian the lines may be addressed:

"Death seems the conqueror now,
And yet the victor thou:
The fatal shaft, its venom quenched in thee,
A mortal raised to immortality."

"I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

We have a third thought. *The Christian must assert his dignity as owner of the world.*

Wealthy people as a rule have a more dignified bearing than the poor. Take your rich friend. The chances are that he walks erect, head up, chest forward. You cannot blame him, for that is the proper way to walk. But your poor neighbor likely stoops a little.

We Christians often act as if we were very poor. We go through the world head hanging, eyes drooping, knees knocking, shoulders stooped. Sometimes we almost resemble a dog that has just been whipped by its master. Shame on us! We are the owners of the universe. To call ourselves millionaires is exceedingly modest. Then let us insist on our dignity!

I recall my first visit to the city of Chicago. I was ten years old at the time. The family spent a few days at the home of a minister. What struck me about our host was that he was inordinately proud of residing in Chicago and claimed everything in the city as his own. Among the sights which he showed us were Siegel and Cooper's, "our" biggest store, "our" Board of Trade, "our" Masonic Temple, then the

tallest building in the city, "our" lake front, "our" Art Museum. There was, of course, a humorous side to it all; yet, who could deny the man's claim altogether?

With much more justice the Christian claims the world as his own. Perhaps you will go to the Niagara Falls next summer. If you should, remember that those magnificent falls are yours. Or maybe you are going to Yellowstone Park. If so, don't hesitate to call that natural paradise your own. Or if you should cross the Atlantic and behold the vast expanse of water and sky, don't forget that all is yours.

In a hot political campaign an American politician is said to have wired to his manager: "Claim everything!" Naturally, that was largely political bluff. But the Christian may truthfully and justly claim everything.

"I have a stake in every star,
In every beam that fills the day;
All hearts of men my coffers are,
My ores arterial tides convey;
The fields, the skies,
The sweet replies
Of thought to thought are my gold-dust;
The oaks, the brooks,
And sparkling looks
Of lovers, faith and friendship's trust."

May I make a rather idealistic suggestion? Visionary though it may seem, it

may not be ignored. It is often said that Satan has practically monopolized certain spheres of activity, certain things in the world, such fine arts, for instance, as music, sculpture, and acting. While this statement is altogether too sweeping, it cannot be denied that he is employing certain arts very freely, and successfully, too, for the furtherance of his cause. Some Christians conclude that it is their solemn duty to shun these things altogether, to adopt the policy of "touch not, taste not, handle not." I shall not deny that this may become necessary in certain isolated cases. But I wish to say emphatically that to make this a general policy would not be Christian. We may not leave the field to the foe; we are to claim it for ourselves. Better still, our big duty as Christians is to use every good gift of God to his glorification. I know this is idealism; but what am I here for, if not to preach idealism? The task may look hopeless; but not to attempt it is a sin of omission.

Much *can* be done along this line. Only a few weeks ago the St. Olaf Lutheran Choir sang Christian songs, only Christian songs, and sang them very beautifully, in the Armory of our city to an immense audience. It has sung these same Christian songs to many audiences all over the country. This choir is claiming the field of

music for Christ. It does not propose to leave it to Satan. Such is vigorous, aggressive Christianity. The world is ours, and we must use it for our Lord.

One more thought must be brought out in this connection. *While the Christian's enjoyment of the world is for the time being limited, he looks forward to the day when he will enjoy it to the full.*

There is such a thing as owning something without being able to use it with perfect freedom. A rich man dies and leaves all his possessions to his son. But the son happens to be a minor, and the will stipulates that he shall not have the full enjoyment of his riches until he reaches the age of twenty-one. He is the owner of the estate right now, but as yet he may not use it freely. It will not do to call the Christian a minor; yet it is true that, though he is the owner of the universe, his actual use of it is limited.

A few of the things that limit our use of the world may be named.

Obviously, we must recognize the right of private ownership.

My neighbor has a cherry tree in his yard. In spring it is going to blossom, and in June or July the cherries will be ripe. For the sake of argument let us say that he is not a Christian, while I am. One day he finds

me picking several boxes of his cherries. In surprise he calls out: "What's the matter now? What ails you?" I reply: "I am a Christian; all things are mine; these cherries are mine, not yours." Don't you know, pretty soon things would begin to happen? There is such a thing as private property.

Is it too bold to assert that in heaven there will be no private property? There is going to be real community of goods there. But as yet we haven't come to that point.

Another thing that limits our use of the world is the sinful nature which we carry about with us.

Because of our sinfulness we are ever in danger of making a wrong use of good things. Things in themselves good often turn out to be stumbling-blocks over which we fall into sin. This Jesus referred to when he said: "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; for it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed or with one eye than to be cast whole into hell." Now manifestly, a hand, a foot, or an eye is a very valuable asset. Yet Jesus says that they may become occasions for sinning, in which case we must be willing to forego them. By way of practical ap-

plication let me say that here is a conclusive reason why many a man must practice total abstinence from intoxicating beverages.

But one day we shall leave our sinful nature behind, and then we shall be ready to enter upon the full enjoyment of the universe. Do not suppose that this earth will be burned to a heap of ashes. God will not destroy the work of his hands. He will purify it by fire. There will be a renewed earth. With it heaven will be combined, I believe. Did not John see the New Jerusalem come down from God out of heaven? And are we not told that they will bring the riches and the glory of the nations into the New Jerusalem? Then man will experience the final fulfillment of the wonderful prophecy of Psalm eight: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet."

B

We must hasten to make a few pointed remarks about our second paradox. The Christian owns everything, but he himself is owned by Christ. It follows that he owns nothing. If he belongs to Christ, then the things which are said to be his are also Christ's.

A slave owns a hut, a wife, some children, his clothes, and a few trinkets. But, being a slave, he does not belong to himself. He belongs to his master. And so his hut, his wife, his children, his clothes, and whatever other things he may have are not his but his master's. In like manner nothing belongs to the Christian. All he is and has is Christ's.

Surely, here is a striking paradox: the owner of the universe, owner of nothing. But the contradiction is apparent, not real. Let me point that out.

Precisely because we are Christ's all things are ours. How do we become Christ's? By faith, do we not? Now what does faith do? It gives all away. It makes a complete surrender to Christ of everything including self. But faith also takes all. It appropriates Christ and his benefits. So faith both gives and takes. It gives all, and it takes all.

Faith resembles love. It, too, gives all and takes all.

Christianity teems with similar paradoxes, so much so that our religion is sometimes said to be one big paradox. If you want to be happy, forget about being happy; just do your duty. The best way to get money is to give it away. If you want to save your life, by all means lose it.

Similarly, if you wish to be owner of the universe, surrender all you have and all you are to Christ.

Attention must now be called to an important aspect of the Christ which, I am sorry to say, is often overlooked, even by fundamentalist ministers. He is the Savior of men, to be sure; but it may not be forgotten that he is also the Creator and Restorer of all things. Christ has not only soteriological significance, but also cosmological. Jesus not only saves sinners, but, as Paul says in Colossians: "All things were created by him and for him; he is before all things, and all things consist by him." He is Head of the church, but also King of kings and Lord of lords. Religion and science meet in him. In him the secular and the spiritual embrace and kiss each other. Christ is the owner of the universe. Consequently, those who have surrendered to him may call the world their own.

Some of us have not yet received Christ in faith. I beg you not to continue in your unbelief. As long as you do, you are poor, desperately poor, much poorer than the proverbial church-mouse.

The Christian is a millionaire many times over. He is very modest withal. Don't let this sermon puff you up! True, all things are yours; yet you may not call even your soul your own; all is Christ's.

Don't say: "All things are mine," and stop! Add: "And I am Christ's"! Let him that glories glory in the Lord.

The Bible tells of a slave, Onesimus by name, who ran away from his master, Philemon, to the city of Rome. I fear greatly that some of us have run away from our Master to Rome, city of the world and of worldliness. If that applies to you, do return home, as did Onesimus, lest you die in abject poverty.

I wonder whether the best of us is always mindful of it that Christ is the owner of all things and that things are ours only in relation to him. I wonder whether we are prepared to give a good account of our use of *Christ's* world. Is it possible that some of us are wasting part of *his* goods in riotous living? May it be that others are hiding *his* talents in a napkin in the earth? When he comes to demand an account, shall we be able to say that we used the world to *his* glory?

We conclude with some beautiful words of Thomas Story, a little known eighteenth century saint. May they be yours and mine.

"He called for my life, and I offered it at his footstool; but he gave it me as a prey, with unspeakable addition. He called for my will and I resigned it at his call; but he returned me his

own in token of his love. He called for the world and I laid it at his feet, with the crowns thereof; I withheld them not at the beckoning of his hand. But mark the benefit of exchange! For he gave me, instead of the earth, a kingdom of eternal peace, and in lieu of the crowns of vanity a crown of glory . . . . He gave me joy which no tongue can express and peace which passeth understanding. My heart was melted with the height of comfort; my soul was immersed in the depth of love; my eyes overflowed with tears of greatest pleasure. . . . . I begged himself and he gave ALL."

EVANGELIZING THE WORLD

An Ardent Missionary

VIII

EVANGELIZING THE WORLD

An Ardent Missionary

> "And he said unto them: 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.' "
>
> —Mark 16:15

OUR text is correctly called *the Great Commission.* In it Jesus charges the church with its most important duty, the evangelization of the world.

Our theme may also be worded: THE CHRISTIAN AS MISSIONARY. We call attention to:

A. *His Motive.*

B. *His Qualification.*

C. *His Business.*

D. *His Field.*

A

There was a time when Christian missions were sneered at. Those of us who are well acquainted with the works of Dickens and Thackeray will recall that these great authors rather delighted in tak-

ing an occasional jibe at missions. This attitude seems to have been quite general at the time. Not so very many years ago some good Christian churches inclined to oppose foreign missions. In 1796, just a little more than a hundred years ago, there was before the Assembly of the Scotch Church a proposal to evangelize the heathen. It was met with the resolution that "to spread abroad the knowledge of the Gospel amongst barbarous and heathen nations seems to be highly preposterous, in so far as philosophy and learning must in the nature of things take the precedence, and that, while there remains a single individual at home without the means of religious knowledge, to propagate it abroad would be improper and absurd." Happily, this resolution was not adopted.

Those times have passed. Practically all Christian churches today are convinced of the necessity of foreign missions. Almost every Christian is doing something for missions, many are doing much. In fact, there appears to be more interest in this cause today than at any other time since the apostolic age. Ours is a missionary era.

Yet it may be well to seek an answer to the question *why* the Christian church in general and each Christian in particular must further the cause of missions.

It is often said that a missionary should

find his motive in the appalling needs of the poor benighted heathen. It has sometimes been remarked by individuals inclined to be hypercalvinistic that this motive is not at all a good one, but that the glorification of God is the only proper motive. I demur at this false antithesis. Does not the second table of the law, which is like unto the first, command us to love our neighbors? And are not all men our neighbors? Pity for those who know not the way of life may well move us to bring them the glad tidings of salvation in Jesus.

I am reminded of the story how a certain man became a missionary. He lived on the western prairies. One day he was riding on his horse through the tall prairie grass, while his little boy was walking alongside. Suddenly the boy disappeared. The father thought he was hiding just for fun, and rode on. Then suddenly it dawned on him that at the very place where the lad had vanished there was an old well. Might the well have swallowed him up? He hastened back to the spot and pulled his son out in time to save his life. The very first words spoken by the rescued boy were: "Dad, why did you wait so long? Why didn't you come sooner?" Presently the father thought of the millions of Christless men, women, and children sinking into perdition. He wondered why Christians did

not hasten to bring them the tidings of salvation. He resolved to become a missionary.

Pity for perishing human beings is a worthy motive for missions, but there is a more compelling. The most compelling motive is the Master's command recorded in our text. Love for Christ is an even stronger motive than love for men. Whoever loves Christ will keep his commandments.

Some time ago I was in conversation with an American missionary to Africa. He told me that he had been moved to undertake his work by the sad plight of the people of that dark continent. But after he had been among them for a while, the awful filth of their bodies and souls made it almost impossible to continue loving them. He was ready to give up. Then it occurred to him that he should preach to the heathen not so much because of his love for them as because of his love for the Master. He continued with renewed vigor.

There is an interesting story told of the Duke of Wellington, the great English general who played so great a part in winning the battle of Waterloo. The question was being discussed whether it was worth while to bring the gospel to the Hindus in British India. When Wellington's opinion was

sought, he replied curtly: "We have our marching orders."

The church has its marching orders in our text.

This is the last command which Jesus gave to the disciples before his return to heaven. It would not be correct to call it his death-bed command. Jesus had already died, had since risen from the dead, and was now about to be exalted to the Father's right hand. Yet we may well attach to this command at least equal importance with the last wish of a dying leader.

A father is on his death-bed. His sons stand at his side. He expresses a last fervent wish. After his demise he would have them aid a certain cause which has the love of his heart. Can you imagine that this wish will be ignored? Of all the wishes ever uttered by the father this one is most certain to be carried out by his sons.

Then should not the final command of the departing Master make an especially deep impression on the minds and hearts of all his followers?

Love, then, impels the Christian to missionary activity: love for his perishing fellows; love, above all else, for his Savior, who loved him so exceedingly that he gave his life for him on Calvary's cross.

B

While nothing is said explicitly in our text about the qualifications of the Christian missionary, much is said by implication.

Really there is but one requirement which the Christian must meet in order to be a missionary. It is exceedingly simple at that. He must be a Christian; that is all.

Saying that, we have in mind what is perhaps the most outstanding characteristic of the Christian: *unselfishness.* Unselfishness is but another name for self-denial. And did not Jesus say: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me"? The very first thing that Jesus requires of his followers is self-denial, unselfishness. It is also the first requirement of the Christian missionary.

There are two sides to the unselfishness that has to be observed by the Christian missionary. In the first place he must be willing to share with others the blessings which he has in Christ. And then, in carrying out his orders, there is sure to be demanded of him, time and again, self-denial, self-sacrifice. Let us enlarge a little on each of these phases.

I am thinking of two Old Testament stories, both of which have reference to missions.

God commanded Jonah to call the Ninevites to repentance. Nineveh was the capital of the world empire of Assyria, under the power of which also Israel was about to fall. At first Jonah flatly refused to obey the voice of the Lord. And when finally he did, under compulsion, warn the Ninevites of coming judgment, he hoped strongly that they might fail to give heed and, in consequence, be destroyed. He sat outside the gate anxiously waiting for fire from heaven to consume the city. No doubt, Nineveh in flames would have been a beautiful picture for him, and the cries of its agonized men, women, and children music to his ears. Do you find it difficult to comprehend the prophet's attitude? But he was an Israelite of the old type who regarded his own nation as the only worth-while people on earth and all others of no account. He had no use for any of them, least of all for Assyria, whose power threatened Israel. He was glad to share in the covenant blessings himself but refused to impart them to other peoples. He was exceedingly selfish. This spirit of his was the very opposite of that which actuates the Christian missionary.

Here is quite another story. God commanded Abraham to leave Ur of the Chaldees for an unknown land, that he might become the father of God's peculiar people.

He called him apart. But even while doing so, he said: "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing, and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Abraham was glad to have it so. How different a spirit from that of Jonah! It was the unselfish, the generous, the liberal spirit of Christianity, though expressed in an Old Testament story. The blessings which the Christian receives from God are but means to an end; in turn he becomes a blessing to others. It is of the very essence of Christianity not merely to be blest, but to bless.

I wonder whether perhaps a few of us are not pretty well satisfied with having the blessings of salvation for themselves and their children, and don't care a great deal about what happens to others round about them. That would not be surprising. Lots of people who go by the name of Christians take that attitude. They are mighty anxious to be saved and to have their children saved, but seem satisfied to have the rest of the world go to the dogs, popularly put; or, more precisely, to hell. That is not an unusual attitude. But it is positively unchristian; it is the very opposite of Christian. Does it seem bold to assert that he who persists in this attitude shows thereby that he is not a Christian? But such is the truth. Christianity means

unselfishness. Every Christian is in the very nature of the case unselfish. The selfish man by his very selfishness rules himself out of the Christian fold.

There comes to my mind an old illustration. It has been used time and again but may well be repeated. In Palestine are two rather large lakes, the Sea of Galilee in the north, and the Dead Sea in the south. In Bible times the former fairly teemed with life. It might almost be called a fisherman's paradise. Several of the disciples made a good living from its waters before the Lord called them to become fishers of men. Even today fishing is said to be good in this lake. But the Dead Sea is dead indeed. No fish can live in it. Its poisonous vapors are said to kill even the birds that attempt to fly across. Hardly a weed will grow on its banks. What makes the difference? Listen! Water flows into the Sea of Galilee from the north and runs out into the Jordan to the south. The waters of Jordan flow into the Dead Sea, but this body has no outlet. The difference is this: the Sea of Galilee receives and gives; the Dead Sea receives but does not give. For that reason the former is alive, the latter dead!

If you go to church, enjoy the services, are comforted by the sermons, and sing of the hope of life everlasting, but are not

concerned about the salvation of your fellowmen, then you are a dead one. With a lie in your right hand you are headed for perdition.

In the spreading of the gospel of his Lord the Christian is willing to endure hardships, to practice self-denial, to make sacrifices.

The little word *go* of our text suggests that. He who goes usually leaves something behind. He who goes out as missionary leaves much behind: friends and relatives, comforts, possibly wealth, likely honor, in large measure the communion of saints.

Abraham is not usually thought of as a missionary. Yet I dare say that God sent him forth from Chaldea as a missionary to the world. How nobly he then sacrificed!

He, too, had to *go*. And as he went he left much behind: his native land, his own people, his comfortable home.

He started out not knowing where the Lord might lead. So does the missionary face an unknown future. Even when he has a definite destination, a certain province of China or a single tribe in Africa, for instance, yet the future is dark. Sometimes a boat is sent out to sea with sealed orders. The captain is forbidden to open his orders until he reaches a certain latitude and longitude. Not until then does he

know where he must go. In a measure every missionary starts out with sealed orders. Well may he say: "I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me." And again it behooves him to sing: "If Jesus goes with me, I'll go anywhere."

Abraham started out from Ur of the Chaldees with some of his relatives. They came to a place called Haran and stopped a while. It was not a difficult journey from Ur to Haran. All the while they traveled along the fruitful banks of the Euphrates. In Haran most of his relatives stayed, but Abraham went on, now on a hard and hazardous journey across the mountains, until he came to the land of Canaan. The others also left Ur, as did Abraham, but they stopped at the mountains. Abraham went over the mountains. They sacrificed a little. Abraham endured hardships to the limit.

I fear that several of us are living in Haran now. They started out from Ur all right. They began to practice a little self-denial. But they never got very far. They did not go to any great lengths. They never climbed a real mountain. When it began to hurt, they stopped sacrificing. Concretely, how many of us have really sacrificed of their money, their time, their energy, their children, for the cause of Jesus Christ,

until it hurt? To be frank with you, I don't think many of us have.

What flabby Christians we are!

Would you know what it means to sacrifice for Christ? Then listen to a testimony by Paul, the great missionary-apostle. "Of the Jews received I forty stripes save one five times; thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." That's hardship for you!

At the close of Paul's letter to the Galatians occurs a curious statement. Certain Judaizers in the churches of Galatia were almost bothering the life out of the apostle. Now, before laying down his pen, he tells them to quit bothering him, for, says he: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He had marks, actual scars, on his body resulting from the treatment accorded him as he proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ. Very likely some were left from the stoning, well nigh to death, which he

underwent at Lystra in Asia Minor on his first missionary journey.

Paul was a brave soldier of Jesus Christ, not afraid of wounds, willing, if need be, to die for his Lord. He actually did die a martyr's death. Where do you and I come in?

May I talk just a minute to the young people in particular? Do you ever stop to consider that God might want you to become missionaries? Of course, all of us must be missionaries in our own immediate surroundings. That goes without saying. But likely God wants some of you to carry the gospel of his Son to the utmost parts of the earth. Think it over! Pray it over! And, while doing so, don't let the thought of hardships hold you back! Remember that self-denial is the very first requirement for discipleship. It is said that the Moravian Brethren are the most active missionaries in the world. They have a missionary in the field for every fifty-eight members at home. Do you know what that would mean for this congregation? In the same proportion some sixteen of us would have to become missionaries. Might you not be one of the sixteen?

I want to make what may possibly be considered a somewhat curious remark about the self-sacrifice exercised by missionaries. To be perfectly frank, I am in-

clined to think that some of the talk about the awful privations endured by foreign missionaries is overdone a little. To be sure, in many cases they sacrifice much. But I do believe that nowadays several Christian missionaries in foreign lands are having a fairly good time of it. At least a few are enjoying life as much as they would at home. I am even bold to suggest that there may be those who decided to go to foreign fields because they thought they might succeed there and feared failure at home. Not every missionary has to be profoundly pitied. But, on the other hand, I am firmly convinced that we who stay at home ought to sacrifice incomparably more than we do for the cause of Christ. We must give, not merely boxes of cast-off clothing and an occasional dollar, but a large part of our good money and several of our inexpressibly dear children.

It has been remarked that the one necessary qualification of a missionary is that he be a Christian. Now the corollary must be added that every Christian is a missionary. Actually, *every Christian is a missionary.*

If you are not in any sense a missionary, you are not a Christian. If you never testify for Jesus Christ in the world, you are none of his. Missionary activity is a test of Christianity. And conversely, if you are a Christian you cannot help being a

missionary. It may be that you are a missionary without realizing it. To be one, all you have to do is to be a Christian.

One of our Lord's missionary texts proves this. He described his followers thus: "Ye are the light of the world." He did not say: "Ye must be the light of the world," but: "Ye *are*—." Every Christian is as a matter of fact the light of the world. Does light have to put forth an effort to shine? Of course not. It just shines. It cannot help shining. It is of the essence of light to shine. So it is of the essence of Christianity to shine. And every one who lets his light shine before men is a missionary.

C

Jesus tells us that the Christian missionary's task is to preach the gospel.

It is not his business to spread our western civilization. To be sure, several elements in our civilization are by-products of Christianity and are well worth imparting to others. But, on the other hand, there is much about it, too, that we had better not propagate. In several respects the heathen are at least as well off without the thing that we call civilization.

Some people seem to think that missionaries should teach the use of toothbrushes. But some of our own dentists tell

us that, if only we would eat coarse foods, we would not have to brush our teeth. Some African tribes have much better teeth than the average American.

On the principle that "cleanliness is next to godliness," it has been suggested that missionaries should introduce bathtubs to foreign peoples. But I have met filthy folk who were godly and meticulously clean folk who were godless. Lots of people who never saw a bathtub are on the way to heaven, while others who bathe every day are headed in the opposite direction.

One of the results of our foreign missionary enterprises is that students have come in rather large numbers to our American universities from Japan, China, India, and other lands. Our missionaries interested them in Christianity. Some actually embraced our religion before coming here. But after a brief stay among us they lost their interest and threw Christianity overboard. They said: "If America is Christian, we don't care about Christianity." They made a serious mistake. They confused American civilization with true Christianity. But we are more blameworthy than they. Remember, one may be a highly civilized, cultured American without being a Christian!

Many think it is the missionary's task to teach morality. They want him to tell men

to quit drinking, to stop the practice of polygamy, and so on. Such surely is his duty, but not the first. Christianity is not in the first place a code of ethics. It offers salvation as a gift and then insists that those who receive this gift show their gratitude by leading a godly life. Its message is not: "Do and live," but: "Live and do."

The business of the Christian missionary is to preach the gospel.

The gospel is the story of Jesus Christ and him crucified, the story of his death on Calvary for the sin of man. "He was bruised for our iniquities, he was wounded for our transgressions; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed." In his blood peace is proclaimed both to those who are near and to those who are afar off. Vicarious atonement by the blood of Christ, that is the very heart of the gospel.

On the basis of the finished work of Jesus, God offers eternal life freely to all men everywhere. To sum up the gospel message in a sentence, God says to sinners: "I make you a present of eternal life; you need not work for it, nor need you pay for it, for Jesus paid the full price and did all the work; you may have it for nothing." That is the gospel.

This offer of salvation is made in all sincerity to all who hear it. Does this state-

ment savor of Arminianism? No, it is thoroughly Biblical and soundly Calvinistic. God is pleased, delighted, to have the gospel accepted by every individual that hears it. He swears by himself: "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but therein that the wicked turn from his evil ways and live." Does not Jesus command in our text to preach the gospel to *every* creature? What is the sense of preaching the gospel to every creature unless the offer of salvation is sincere in the case of every creature?

Many there are in our day who tell us blandly: "The Christian religion is a very fine one; it ranks among the best; it is, indeed, the best of all; but it will no longer do for us to call it the only true religion. Modern research has disclosed the fact that other religions are good too. And so the Christian missionary may not ask the so-called heathen to discard their religion for his."

Beyond dispute, there are elements of truth in all religions. Missionaries should seek points of contact in these elements. Paul did that in Athens when he found occasion in the altar "to the unknown God" to preach Christ. And yet the Christian religion is the one true religion. It proclaims the one true God, whom Christ revealed. It points out the only way of sal-

vation, of which Jesus declared majestically: "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

The Christian missionary must be firmly convinced of the absolute finality of his religion.

D

We are to go into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature. So the world is our field.

When speaking of all the world, we think of Africa, China, British India, South America, and other distant lands. But don't you know that these United States of America are also in the world? Is it possible that some of us have forgotten that the city of Grand Rapids is in the world? May it be that several of us have overlooked the fact that their home is in the world? When Jesus commanded us to preach the gospel in all the world, he referred not only to distant lands and islands of the sea, but to our own immediate surroundings as well. Elsewhere he told his disciples to begin at Jerusalem. That was saying that they should begin at home.

Here, to my mind, is one of the greatest weaknesses of American Christianity. We make much of foreign missions. That is

well and good, necessary even. But we are neglecting our own homes, our own children. To speak in terms of a well known war-time song, we don't "keep the home fires burning." A couple of years ago I heard Samuel Zwemer, the great missionary of the Reformed Church, tell an American audience that many Moslem children in Arabia were getting much more of a Christian education than were theirs. Here is a most serious situation. Let us keep our basis of operations strong!

The expression *all the world* suggests the universality of Christianity.

We distinguish between the period of particularism and that of universalism. Old Testament times were characterized by particularism; we are living in the age of universalism. Israel was God's chosen people, while all the other nations of earth were largely left to walk after the lusts of their evil hearts. Now things are altogether different. Ever since Jesus was lifted up on the cross, he has been drawing all men to himself. One nation is not preferred now by God above another. The gospel is no longer confined to Jewry; the whole gentile world is invited to share in the blessings of salvation.

Some think Christianity a narrow religion. It is not that. To the contrary, it is exceedingly broad. It is by far the broad-

est religion in the world. It alone meets the needs of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. It is adapted to the characteristics of all peoples scattered over the face of the globe. The emotional negro may be as good a Christian as the phlegmatic Hollander; the mystic of India may be as good a Christian as the practical American; the vivacious Frenchman may be as good a Christian as the stolid Scotchman; the pompous Oriental may be as good a Christian as the plain Occidental.

The question is coming to the fore whether our converts in China should be asked to unite with our Reformed denomination, or should be referred to the Christian Church of China for membership. I shall not attempt to settle this question but would like to make a few remarks that have a bearing on it. Much depends on what is meant by being Reformed. If *Reformed* stands for the best interpretation of Christianity—and to my mind it stands for precisely that—then let us insist that they be Reformed, if not in name, yet in reality. But God forbid that we should ever impose upon them that whole body of traditions and customs which is our heritage.

Recently a Professor of Western Theological Seminary lectured in our city on the subject: *World-flight versus World-con-*

quest. That was a good subject. I wonder whether any of us prefer world-flight to world-conquest and suppose that the former is more genuinely Christian than the latter. The generation of those who think that the one big duty of the Christian is to get away from the world is by no means extinct. But what does Jesus say in our text? Does he say: "Come here, my disciples; withdraw from the wicked world and get off by yourselves in some little corner of the earth"? Not at all. He commands the very opposite: "Go ye into all the world." Not world-flight, but world-conquest is genuinely Christian.

It is nineteen centuries since Jesus gave his church *the Great Commission,* and still the task is unfinished. What is the matter? Simply this: the church has not been sufficiently Christian; Christ's followers have not kept in close enough touch with their Lord. Christians are the salt of the earth, but it is Christ who gives the salt its savor. If they lose their savor, this is invariably due to failure to keep in vital contact with him.

At one time money from all over the world was pouring into the papal coffers. Said the pope with a chuckle to Thomas Aquinas: "If St. Peter were here now, he could not say what he said to the cripple at the Beautiful gate of the temple, 'Silver

and gold have I none.'" Thomas thought of the decadent condition of the church at the time and retorted: "But neither could he say, 'Rise up and walk'."

You have heard of Savonarola, the great Italian forerunner of the Protestant Reformation. Thundered he: "In the primitive church the chalices were of wood, the prelates of gold; in these days the church hath chalices of gold and prelates of wood."

Must not somewhat the same charge be laid at the door of the church of today? Many of its leaders are of wood and so are many of the people in the pews. Many members of the church are as wooden as the pews in which they sit.

Oh, for a revival of the church! Oh, for closer contact of the members of the church with Christ, the living Head! What missionary zeal would then be displayed! Presently the seed of the gospel would be sown in every nook and corner of the field, all over the world.

The Greek historian Diodorus of Sicily tells of a fire in the Pyrenees which not only destroyed the woods but actually burned into the ground until a stream of pure silver flowed down the mountainsides.

If the Spirit of God should burn in your heart and mine, should burn everywhere in the Christian church, a stream of the knowledge of the Lord would flow out over

the whole world, and presently the knowledge of the Lord would fill the earth as the waters cover the sea. The song would soon be heard: "The Kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

"Waft, waft, ye winds, his story,
And you, ye waters, roll,
Till like a sea of glory
It spreads from pole to pole;
Till o'er our ransomed nature,
The Lamb for sinners slain,
Redeemer, King, Creator,
In bliss returns to reign."

THE END

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